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centenary review

From the Editor:

This is the first issue of a new literary magazine, *the centenary review*, published and edited by the *Venture* group, young writers possessing similar ideals and literary principles, who feel that there is a definite need for literary expression in this section of the country.

A new magazine such as this has been the long felt need to give more voice to both younger writers and established ones whose work will appear from time to time in this review. Manuscripts will be welcomed and will be subject to the approval of the Editorial Board.

Credit for the birth of this review must go to the members of *Venture* who have laboured very long and very hard to make its publication possible.

Albert Paris Leary
Editor

the centenary review

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This Issue . . .

Evan Campbell is a young author in the field of economics, studying for a degree at Centenary College; his interest has been devoted mainly to factual writings, but he has in preparation a number of short stories and other essays such as *Trouble In Paradise*, found on page 7.

Albert Paris Leary is a young poet studying for degree in literature at Centenary College. His interest is widely divided, perhaps with an emphasis on poetry. He has a novel in preparation, another part of which may appear in a future issue of *the centenary review*.

James Aswell is a well known writer whose novel, *The Midsummer Fires*, was published last year; his short stories have appeared in national magazines for a number of years. For those readers who have followed Mr. Aswell's works closely it will be of interest that *Vicarious* is the exact point at which he changed his focus from what people *do* to the terrors and dramas inside the mind. It is a schizoid story; the outcome of this technique may be found in *The Midsummer Fires*. Mr. Aswell is currently at work on a new novel.

Raymond Carey has been interested in Carl Sandburg for quite some time and has written many illuminating essays on that poet. Perhaps the tersest and most evaluating of these is his verse on page 22; this must not be taken as mere parody; it is something far deeper than any parody ever is.

Mary Jane Callaban whose sharp satire on *Venture* appears on page 11 is essentially an essayist; however she is also interested in verse, and three of her shorter poems appear on pages 25 and 26. She has gone into Public Relations work after receiving her degree from Centenary College.

Ada Jack Carver, whose play *The Cajun* is one of the most memorable of Oneacts, has been a Harper Prize Winner and a contributor to nationally known magazines for a number of years. (Perhaps her most famous stories are *Red Bone*, *Treesby* and *Cotton Dolly*.) At present she is at work on a new play.

(Continued on page 36)

VICARIOUS

By

JAMES ASWELL

Author of "*The Midsummer Fires*"

Professor Maurice Tenters of Southeastern Tech's mathematics department hung his lean, bespectacled face forward as though his chin rested on a wire. His heart beat fast in a strange cold delicious darkness. It was coming. It was coming now. And no one, no one would ever know how he felt.

Hot; lush, balmy-hot—deep summer night in the deep South. Resin rose from the pine seats of the old arena to spoil pants and dresses unheeded as the preliminary black boys sparred and slugged and grappled under the baking ring lights. The crowd, a damp, summery, farm-and-village crowd, moaned with delight.

The Plantsville arena was small and steep, seating maybe five hundred people; it was full. Ropes divided the tiered seats into white and colored sections, like a cake iced half with chocolate and half with vanilla.

And high in the vanilla section the gray-eyed girl named Nan pulled Professor Tenter's sleeve.

"Look. Ted. He's coming. Oh Lord, I hope he *wins*!"

Professor Tenters unhooked his chin from the non-existent wire. He put the automatic part of him into operation. He could do that. He made a deprecatory noise in his throat, patted Nan's shoulder.

"It's not important, dear. You mustn't be so excited. It's simply experience for Ted. He can look back on the whole thing as a unique intellectual adventure, rounding him into manhood. I always say this boxing will make a better teacher of him, show him things about psychology he could never otherwise learn."

Automatic talk. He had said these things so many times. Even to Ted. No one, not Ted or Nan ever, even after they were married, would guess the earthquakes which shook his heart tonight.

"You're so *cold* about it, Professor. I don't see—Oh, he *is* lovely to look at, isn't he? And suddenly Nan bit her lip and went silent, blushing.

The Professor made the sort of noise kindly old professors make in the presence of young love. But he thought: *Lord God she's right. My son is a beautiful thing to look at.*

And Ted Tenters was that. He stood easily in one corner of the makeshift ring, pawing the canvas with his hard legs. He was Y-shaped, all brawn and hair-trigger sinew. That physique was no accident, either,

Professor Tenters reflected with sly pride. It was no accident that a gnome-like man wearing horn-rimmed spectacles had taken a three-year-old motherless boy by the hand that night long ago and, in the school gym, introduced him to parallel bars and Indian clubs and shadow-boxing.

Nan, her confusion forgotten, was talking excitedly again now. "Oh, Professor, look at his *opponent*! He looks like a brute, Professor. Oh, if I were Ted I'd be scared to death. I hope—"

Professor Tenters clucked softly, reassuringly, turning the automatic valve again. "My dear, you simply musn't agitate yourself so. Ted won't be hurt. He's never even been knocked down in all his amateur and his five professional fights. And what if he does lose? This is not his work, dear."

"But you're so *cold* about it. How on earth can you—"

Professor Tenter's eyes were narrowed as he studied the big red-headed youth opposite his son. George "Killer" Doyle, of Memphis, with a record of forty-six professional knockouts—in small-time stuff, of course, but a potential comer. He was without question a disturbing animal with that flaming hair, those prehensile arms and cunning eyes. But Ted couldn't lose. Not possibly. Not after all these years of preparation, all this waiting—

The referee was giving final instructions now in the center of the ring.

Nan said: "I think that man in the Panama hat near the ring is the fellow who came over from New Orleans to see Ted work. If he wins they say he'll be offered a contract. Oh, Professor, I hope he *does* win!"

Professor Tenters gave a hollow laugh. His classroom laugh. "In that case I certainly hope he loses."

The bell.

Professor Tenters shot his chin forward, galvanized past all pretense. It was beginning. He was down there now in the ring, fighting with Ted, feeling every blow, consulting in every strategy.

Both boys sparred off warily. Ted danced around the red head; feinted; experimented with several gentle lefts. Now Doyle moved in and fired a left and a right which glanced off Ted's gloves. Ted retaliated with a vicious hook. It landed, but not squarely. They clinched and the referee broke them.

Ted was dancing again. He charged and fired three or four experimental lefts. Doyle replied with a hard right which missed. They clinched again.

Suddenly Professor Tenters became aware that he had been yelling and that he was involved in some sort of altercation with the man in front of him.

"—got to keep your feet to yourself."

Nan was tugging at his sleeve.

"Professor! You're annoying people in the next row. Sit back a little. There. Well, you're at least *human*." She grinned.

"Of course."

The round was over now. Ted was safe. He had the other fellow's measure. He'd romp home now.

Professor Tenters apologized to the man whose back he had been belaboring with his knees; relaxed, grew almost gay with his automatic talk.

"Yes, my dear, I suppose I did respond a little to the excitement of the fight. But as I always tell my classes, and I've told Ted since he was a little boy, there's more pure excitement in an idea, more wallop from sheer intellectual curiosity than from all the sports and games and physical stimuli there are."

"Uh-huh," said Nan, her eyes on Ted. "But I think that man in the Panama looks interested."

"My dear, you certainly don't want our boy to get into the fight business—not seriously. You know as well as I do that Ted has his heart set on teaching psychology and he'll make a great teacher."

"Of course," said Nan.

The bell for the second round exploded like an ice bomb in Professor Tenter's head. He went away again from Nan.

Ted moved in grinning now. He took three short jabs to the body and uncorked a swinging right which landed. Doyle shook his head, danced back and in. They traded lefts and rights briefly on the ropes and then Ted fired a really hard one, the first serious blow he had attempted and it caught Doyle on the chin. He was staggered. They clinched.

Professor Tenter's heart sang. Of course. It was coming. It was coming now. Lies, lies, lies. What did they matter? Intellectual excitement, his foot! Ted would win and go on winning, up and up. Fierce, dreadful battles, near escapes from defeat, high victories in a hundred cities, life, all the dark hot juice of life pumping free. And a little near-sighted boy with a skinny chest and a drawer full of correspondence courses in muscle development from the advertisements, a little near-sighted boy who worshipped Jim Jeffries but who had a strange, dull talent for doing sums in the head, would come into his own—after fifty years.

Now Ted broke carelessly from the clinch and Doyle got in two hard, thudding blows to the mid-section. Ted broke away, dancing, in agony. But then his face cleared. The grin came back and he moved toward Doyle purposefully. The bell ended the round.

And simultaneously the patron in front of Professor Tenters lunged back so hard that the Professor was catapulted against the knees of the man behind him.

"Hey, you—" the Professor screamed. And then: "Oh, I beg your pardon, sir. I forgot—"

Nan giggled.

The third round began fast. Ted carried the battle now, with the air of a man who wanted to get something finished. He took three des-

perate rights to the head and then crossed a pair of vicious blows to Doyle's head. Doyle went off balance and Ted fired another stick of dynamite at his ribs. Doyle went to his knees and then to the floor. He got up on the count of nine, but the crowd was roaring now and the kill was imminent.

But in the next fifteen seconds many things happened. The man in front of Professor Tenters, for one thing, lunged back so angrily that the Professor was sprawled into the lap of a fat man behind him. And for another the crowd, with the exception of the Professor, who was struggling wildly to join them, was on its feet, yelling. At last he fought his way up, in time to see the referee standing there with—Oh, God!—with Doyle's hand in the air. On the canvas lay the prone form of Ted Tenters, moving feebly.

* * *

Ted walked up to the car, parked under a street light, and said, "Hello folks!"

He was paper-pale. One eye was blue.

Nan cried: "Ted! Are you hurt?"

"Not a bit. Well, not much. A little dazed."

Nan put the car into low. Professor Tenters, on the back seat, murmured harshly:

"You lost!"

"I sure did, Dad. And you know, I'll never know just *how* I lost. I had Doyle whipped. And then a funny thing happened. I saw the look in his eyes. That fight meant so much to him, with that man from New Orleans watching and all. Why, it was his whole *life*. And he was losing."

Ted chuckled then and went on after a pause.

"Day, I think you lost me that fight. You've always said that there's more wallop in a pure *idea* than in any sport or game and suddenly I had a notion. I'd write my master's thesis on the psychological reactions of a fighter and on how it felt to be knocked out. I didn't do it purposely. I wanted to win—with my conscious mind. But I think something subtle and exciting from deep inside my mind made me open up a little, give Doyle his opportunity to come inside my guard and strike. And he did—and how!"

"Most interesting," said Professor Tenters.

And that night, standing in his pajama trousers in front of his bedroom mirror, the Professor felt his frail, sore body over gingerly. Lies, he thought. So many lies, so many years. Automatic talk—lies come home to roost. But were they lies? Were they really—?

Anyhow, maybe it was just as well. He was a mass of bruises—knees and back and chest.

"He'd have fought the big ones eventually," he murmured confusedly. "I never could have taken it. Louis—why even Galento would murder me." He felt a blue ellipse on his right kneecap. "Yes. Those big ones would have murdered me sure."

Trouble In Paradise

By EVAN CAMPBELL

It is immediately apparent to the student of the matter that a shift is taking place in the established distribution of industrial capital in the U. S. Since the late thirties, there has been an ever increasing tendency for both population and industry to move away from the crowded and generally unsatisfactory conditions of the Northeast to the relatively undeveloped South and West. The center of population has moved from Ohio to Illinois since the nineteen thirty census. The cities of the Mid-West and South-West have recorded an almost phenomenal growth in population and capital. Consider the most outstanding example of this, Houston. The 1940 census gave it about 360,000, but the latest estimate places it around 600,000, an almost two to one jump. Accompanying this were hundreds of new industries and businesses, which are flourishing in a way reminiscent of the old time boom-town.

Although Houston is perhaps the best known of the new growing cities of the section it is by no means the only one. Along with it are Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio, New Orleans, Shreveport, Baton Rouge, Jackson, Little Rock, Tulsa, Oklahoma City and many others. The list of industries migrating to these cities sounds like a roll call of the machine age. Every type of major manufacturing and retailing is represented, along with many others unique to this area.

There is one thing which the last few years has not changed, the importance of oil. Throughout all the southwest, the highways are still crowded with the big trucks which carry the blood of an industrial nation, and the railways have thousands upon thousands of tank cars bearing the names of oil companies. In hundreds of places the sprawling refineries and cracking plants spread their surrealist shapes against the southern sky. Although the other industries are rapidly assuming their rightful positions of importance, the petroleum industry still pervades every aspect of the scene. Many of the cities owe their growth to it. Tulsa would still be a small plains town had it not been for this gift of the earth.

There is still another factor which is gaining tremendously in the Southwestern economy and that is its foreign trade. The new International House in New Orleans gives testimony to the awakening interest of

Southern businessmen to the advantages of trade with other countries. This building enables foreign business and tradesmen to meet with both the representatives of American companies and those of other nations. This, in addition to the International Trade Zone, has sent the harbor traffic of New Orleans booming to new heights. The principal source of this trade is Latin America, but on any day the flags of every nation may be seen in the port, which is the third largest in the nation, in volume of traffic. There are mile after mile of docking facilities and excellent freight connections to other parts of the country, but do not think that New Orleans enjoys unrivaled control of the Southern import dollar. There is a bitter and constantly growing feud between it and Houston which at times assumes almost warlike proportions. Every year, thousands of ships, particularly tankers, come up the Houston ship channel to buy and sell in the Texas metropolis, and to pour millions of dollars into the young economy.

All this progress is still a relatively new thing to the South and it is far from complete, or even well started. There are several factors which serve only to retard progress and in some cases to stop it altogether. There are several of these deterrant factors and it is hard to say which are the most important, but in examining them one should never lose sight of what they are: merely the inevitable barriers which all progress must and will overcome.

First of all there are the diehards, the old guard that resists any change because it is new and because it interferes with the established pattern by which they have lived and prospered for so long. There are many of these in the South, the Rankins, Bilbos and Talmadges that live their parasite existences on the bigotry and ignorance of the people they supposedly represent. They try always to prevent anything which will upset the order which supports them and their kind. The very existence of new jobs and new ways of living makes them shudder in new spasms of bombastic horror. But every year they can feel their long held power slowly but surely sliding from their tenacious grasp. Men like this cannot forever hold back the change which is much too strong for them to stop. One day before many years have passed, the tenant farmers and sharecroppers are going to realize that it is the very men that they have kept in power who are preventing them from finding the plenty for which they have been working blindly for so many decades. There are men such as these everywhere, but they are all seeing that their days are numbered and that the awakening is due. Here in the Southwest it is the blind, obedient, and foolish following of the communists toward the promised land, or the wistful ideals of the socialists. On the other hand there is little similarity to the robber baron tactics of early American Capitalism. No, it is something new, and the old men of the South don't like it. They are still powerful, and will be for some time yet, but the change is coming and these remnants of a dying civilization must realize that they are in the twilight of their power.

The second factor is somewhat more difficult to analyze than the first, and also more temporary. It lies in the remains of the one-crop agricultural economy which held sway for so long. As a matter of pure economics it is obvious that no good can come of the continued overproduction of cotton, although to say this is practically heresy in some circles. Although the entire South suffers from this, the most apparent sufferers are the small one-family farmers. These victims of the law of diminishing returns are what the economist calls marginal producers, i.e. they put more into the land than they get out of it. They are completely tied to the price of cotton, and thus they lead an even more up and down existence than most farmers. Although the warehouses are full of more cotton than could be used in several years of normal use, a surplus is produced every year and the pegged prices won't allow the normal oversupply situation. The entire agricultural set up of the South is changing away from this sort of thing, even though it is a rather difficult transition. New crops are being introduced and many of the people who were formerly hoeing cotton are now operating drill presses and power lathes in some city.

Third comes the more complex problem of absentee ownership. To anyone sincerely interested in southern development, it is a disagreeable fact that a large number of the industries of the South, particularly the later arrivals, are owned, at least in part, by Eastern capital. Now this is considerably more than a matter of resentment of outsiders. The view is widely held that the money made in the South should stay in the South to be reinvested and to create more wealth in the development of the new progress. There is a good deal of justification, both economic and moral, in this, but the situation is partly taking care of itself. Many of the industrialists who opened branch plants in the South were so pleased at the results that they are moving the entire business, thus bringing the capital back. However, this is a problem which must be solved before the transition can be complete.

The last of these factors to be mentioned is perhaps the most difficult of all to unravel and take out into the light. It is the attitude of the rest of the nation, especially the Federal Government, toward the South, which has long held the position, possibly justified, of a poor and not too desirable relation. This is evident in practically everything that Washington has to do with states below the Mason-Dixon line. Apparently the heads of our Government feel that certain demagogues represent the entire Southern population and act accordingly. The instances of this sort of behavior are too numerous to be catalogued here, but a good example was the rider which was almost attached to a Federal education bill which would have prevented aid to any state practicing racial segregation. Now on the surface this might be logical and right, but it also denies this aid to all the other residents of these states, and that is definitely not right. The only possible way that this can be worked out is for both sides to realize that it is to their mutual benefit

to forget old differences and work together to a common end.

Yes, there is trouble in paradise, the kind of trouble Rip Van Winkle must have felt when he awoke to realize that he was in a different world. It's trouble all right, but there are people who like that kind of trouble, and their ranks are growing every day. The South is about ready to greet a guest which is long overdue, but still welcome.



TWO PORTRAITS

I

Four Old Men

In these four faces
Four dawns reveal their
Not so absconded places
Rare in the demi-light of evening,

Obscured by ages and time,
Replaced by memory
Falling vaguely in their
Lime-colored minds
For sake of old man's reverie.

Sitting four together
Observed by children in the street
They form the feather
Movement of time.

II

An Old Woman

Springing in light
The farther method of despondency
Comes home in lines of visaged age.
For when tall shadows no longer lumber
On the walls the home has spent
Its sentient hour.
She awaits the coming of memory
And watches for purple stilts of afterthought,
Fictitiously rocks upon the porch
In front of where the world has settled
At her feet. Not moving to be exchanged
For fancy-world nor progress in the street:
Only waiting in time, a catalyst for her thoughts.

—CHARLES RAINES.

"After Such Knowledge"

By Mary Jane Callahan

September is the cruellest month, blanketing the dead grass with multi-colored leaves and bringing the renaissance of the hopeful literati who gather in smoke-filled rooms to chat knowingly of Peter Viereck and Truman Capote, and place fresh flowers in front of selected volumes of T. S. Eliot.

Ever and always there is the college avant-garde movement—tight little groups of intense people avidly discussing the latest in who published where, world politics, and the limp-watch school of art.

Meetings, like members, are serious and intense, and marked by the sharp rise and fall of too many authoritative voices.

Perhaps the typical example of the avant-garde movement, which leads the remainder of the students like a flying wedge, may be seen in a college organization of our acquaintance known as the "Exploit Club." Their motto is "nothing exploited, nothing gained."

Better insight and description of the local literary luminaries might be gained by giving a fairly accurate account of one of their meetings.

Last time we attended one of their gatherings, we entered a room filled with smoke which was not due to the five leading brands of cigarettes they were smoking, but to incense being burned in front of a volume of T. S. Eliot bound in human hide. The hide, we were told, formerly belonged to a member who, in a moment of weakness, confessed to reading Eddie Guest on occasion.

The meeting began in earnest when Amy St. Vincent Teasdale, president, arose before anyone could protest and began to read one of her own poems. The first stanza went "Go 'way, little ducks in my back yard, ye make me nervous," and the chorus repeated the phrase "Little Ducks" 3,917 times. Miss A. St.V. Teasdale went on to explain that the first stanza expressed her distaste at the sameness of the menu in the cafeteria plus her abnormal desire to use day-old transfers on the trolley, while the chorus expressed the number of light years between Praxiteles and Dostoyevsky.

The sudden rise of a nasal voice in the corner turned our attention to T. S. Sandburg who was standing on his hand-hewn soap-box with the gilt handles and ranting about the sordid effects of the Taft-Hartley law on Scotch-Irish children under five years of age. At the climax of his oration, the room rang with "amen" and wild huzzahs. Members

clapped their feet together wildly and called for more vodka and beer, mixed, in which to drown their individual and collective woes. Amy St. V. T., forgetting all propriety, sprang up on the coffee table and cut as neat a buck and wing as ever was seen.

At this point someone mentioned Karl Shapiro and the group silently and automatically chose up sides and weapons and joined in a merry little free-for-all. When everyone sat quietly or lay unconsciously on the uncarpeted floor, the entertainment of the evening was introduced, consisting of the second movement of Johann Sebastian O'Houlihan's memorable composition "Who Threw The Benzedrine in Mrs. Murphy's Ovaltine?" For an encore, miss sapho sapho sapho, clad in a simple shift of plaid horse blanket, rendered a short reading from the "Master" which moved her so that, as she concluded Shantih

Shantih

Shantih, she fell in a dead faint.

The meeting ended with the president reading solemnly from "Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats" while members stood with bowed and bared heads, after which they filed quietly out, shouldering their manuscripts and kicking aside old bodies and cigaret butts.

September, like we keep saying, is the cruellest month.



TRIOLET AT MASS

My darling makes her cross on breast so fair
That I scarce know which spheres my soul has sought.
As from her sensuous lips there issues prayer
My darling makes her cross on breast so fair
That all the spheres of heaven, earth and air
Are fused, as I, with one unholy thought:
My darling makes her cross on breast so fair
That I scarce know which spheres my soul has sought.

THE RAMIFICATIONS OF DEATH ARE DÆMONIC

The ramifications of death are dæmonic,
The start of the stopping, the swell and contraction
Of watched toward the watcher. A thought near platonic—
"The ramifications of death are dæmonic"—
Serves circumlocution, prevents the ironic
Reality's finding a moment for action...
The ramifications of death are dæmonic,
The start of the stopping, the swell and contraction.

—ROBERT REGAN.

FOR SUELLEN WITH LOVE

By ADA JACK CARVER *

Everyone, even the grown people in the old town on the river where we lived, knew that Suellen told stories. Oh, whoppers, some of them! Like the time she said that her father had betrothed her in infancy (that was Suellen's phrase) to a fabulous Sudanese prince, who was coming to claim her when she was Sweet Sixteen,—the Sweet Sixteen was Suellen's too.

But most of her lies, her little white lies, which after all were not so little and not so white, were concerned with being poor and in want,—Suellen, whose father could buy out the town, people said. On Spring afternoons when school was out, here she'd come, Suellen, sashaying along under the trees, that were dripping with flowers, dressed in borrowed rags, a pair of Bluebell's high-heeled slippers (Bluebell was the colored maid at Suellen's house) hanging sloppily to her feet, slippers she'd fished out of the ash-heap to make herself look thrown-away. And if you so much as *looked* at her she would plant herself in your hammock, or join the grownups brazenly in the best chairs, and without batting an eyelash she would begin to spin her yarns,—on and on and on and on....

"Suellen," someone would say, a grownup probably, "tell what happened to your Uncle Clint."

And that would start Suellen off. Why, her Uncle Clint was in jail, Suellen said. He had killed three men and a child in cold blood, a small innocent new-born babe; and naturally they had locked him up. And now his children were running about the streets half-clad, Suellen said, with little tin cups begging and pleading for a few nickels and dimes to buy themselves a crust of bread. And in two or three weeks, Suellen said, her cousins were coming to live with her, a whole tribe of cousins like an orphan asylum; for her father planned to adopt them, and had already written her Uncle Clint in jail, and the cousins would share her room, Suellen said; and one of them, Jasmine her favorite, would share her bed. Oh, on and on and on and on,—with the grownups by this time shaking their heads and smiling, and us children frankly bored.

"Dear heart!" my mother would say. And jumping up, her embroidery hoops flying, "I'm going straight and telephone Dennis, and give him a piece of my mind. That poor child, that poor *neglected* child."

* *Harper Prize Winner.*

Dennis, you see, was Suellen's father. He was handsome and tall, and he ran with a *fast* set in New Orleans, and the plantation people down in Baton Rouge, who were fast too, and came up in droves for his parties; and once when my father and mother were invited they heard Suellen say, right in front of the guests, who didn't seem at all shocked, "My daddy beat me up last night. You ought to see my back, just a mass of whelps."

"Not *whelps*, Suellen," my father said, "*Welts*."

"And someone else, one of the other guests, said: 'Well, I don't know, we ought to look that up.' And another: 'Why, Suellen, honey! Unbutton your dress, and let us see.'"

But Suellen said no, she wouldn't shame her father; she'd die first and go straight to Hell (yes, she would say it out like that, when the rest of us wouldn't dare even *think* the word); however, later when she told this tale, how her father beat her, she would add that maybe she wouldn't be at home after all when her cousins came, because since her father had grown so cruel she was running away before long, to join Paul English's tent-show, for they needed a little girl to play child-parts and to brush the leading lady's hair, and wash her pretty silk underclothes, and run and light Mr. English's pipe.

"Suellen, go along with you!" we said.

That was the summer Suellen fell in love,—not with Paul English, the show-man, as the rest of us did; no, the object of her affections was Miss Lucy Blade, her music teacher,—and my music teacher, too, though I disliked Lucy Blade and considered her just too prissy for words. Well, it was called a "crush" then (oh, do you *remember?*), and because no one, at least in our town had heard of Freud, or child-psychology, or if they had, paid no attention to it, young girls used to *thrive* on crushes, because people believed then that Nature ordained this in a growing girl (and in her *glands*), to prepare her for the Real Thing; yes, a beautiful safe love, pure and undefiled. And yet, I remember now, it was a sticky suffocating sort of love, for those who had to put up with it; a love that almost consumed Suellen that summer and caused purple patches under her eyes and made her crave pickles and lemonade, sucked through peppermint sticks, and gallons of ice cream and chocolate-covered cherries, and scores of other things, too numerous, too indigestible to mention now. However this side of Suellen's love-affair was pleasant to the rest of us, whose glands, though in a less violent way, were also beginning to function....

"Let's go down town and buy some pickles," Suellen would say, "and sit and watch if *she* goes by."

And so we would go to town, though heaven knows it was no treat to the rest of us to sit and watch Miss Lucy pass,—Miss Lucy who kept

little vials in her purse, of this and that, and who would sit and crunch little pellets even when she was invited to your house, to play the Moonlight Sonata, washing them down with water behind a sheet of music, or her fan. Yes, Suellen had it bad. And just before vacation she was so infatuated with Lucy Blade that she tried to make her father *marry* Miss Lucy, so she could always have her near. And as part of Suellen's strategy she had her father invite Miss Lucy to dinner one night. Suellen's father, Dennis, invited my father and mother too, and me; and this was disappointing to Suellen who wanted Miss Lucy to herself.

Well, I had told Mother what Suellen planned to do, I mean about having her father marry Miss Lucy Blade; and so my mother stopped Suellen's father on the street. "Dennis, you ought to be ashamed of yourself," my mother said. "And Suellen's right, you ought to get married again, and give this child a home. The *right* kind of home," my mother said. And when Dennis laughed in his mocking way and said, well, now, who would marry me? . . . my mother thought a moment and said: "Have you considered Lucy Blade?"

And at that Dennis lifted one eyebrow. "Lucy Blade," he said. "Hmhm. . . do I know the lady?"

"She is your child's music teacher," my mother said. "She could sit and play you the Moonlight Sonata."

"But I don't want the Moonlight Sonata," Dennis said. "I want the *moon*."

And then in his mocking way, my father looking on, Dennis bowed over my mother's hand, and touched a curl of her pretty hair, delicately, with his finger; and he said, well, the loveliest ladies are already married, you see,—and in love with their husbands,—so. . . .

"Oh, go long with yourself!" my mother said.

Well, Dennis invited the three of us to dinner then, and Miss Lucy Blade; and at the table he was gracious and mocking to Miss Lucy, and scared her half out of her wits. And when she left he kissed her hand. "I hope my poor little motherless girl isn't being a *nuisance*," he said.

And at this Suellen threw a fit, though not in the usual way. She grew very still, and she turned pale, and she clutched at Miss Lucy's hand. "Miss Lucy," she whispered, "pay no attention to this gentleman, I beg of you. He isn't really my father, you know. I was left on his doorstep when an infant child."

* * *

That was the summer Suellen developed her famous Inferiority Complex, though of course people didn't call it that then. We just knew, we realized, that Suellen felt *humiliated* oh, because of a lot of things: because her house was too large and too elegant (I lived in a big house

too, that had known elegance in my grandmother's day, but was old now, and a little shabby, and our colored people lived across town, on the hill, while Suellen's lived on the premises in a separate wing, especially Bluebell, their light-colored stylish maid); besides, my family had no car, and had to get by with a surrey. But it was fashionable then to be poor, just as maybe it is now, and some of us used to wish, like the politicians, that we had been born in log cabins. Only Suellen didn't just *wish*—she made it up that she had been born in a shack on the riverside. Oh, and she felt ashamed too, because people thought her father charming. "If you only *knew*!" she'd say. And when we laughed at Suellen she would tear into us with nails and teeth; or she would grow remote and still, with a faraway look in her eyes. And that always got us, and invariably we would make up with Suellen. Suellen felt ashamed too of the wild company her father kept, of the beautiful ladies down from the North who would come and stay for days, bringing their chaperones with them, for the duck-shooting or Mardi Gras, and to run around looking at old houses, and buying up antique furniture....

And Suellen was ashamed, too, because her mother was dead.

This last Suellen felt was pure disgrace,—as if her mother had done a shameful thing by dying, and leaving her in a cold world. "Kit," Suellen would say to me, at school perhaps when a new girl moved to town, or we had a new teacher, "don't say anything about *You Know What*." And I would know what Suellen meant. I knew that Suellen felt *different* because there was only *one* of her, an only child. And because her mother was dead, and only a slab of granite on a hillside and a marble monument with a spray of marble lilies across it, and a name, and a little iron garden chair that nobody could ever use because the birds had claimed it first, tilting on its iron roses and dropping their little messes on the iron seat....

Suellen's mother had been beautiful. "She had skin like gardenia petals," my mother said. "Oh, I know! *Anemia* made her look like that, and just being plain *sickly*. At the same time, it was becoming,—and Dennis, well he worshipped her. She died when Suellen was born."

And so Suellen grew up with some sort of distorted notion, persisting into girlhood, that her mother long years ago when Suellen first saw the light of day, had come in from the garden one morning, her arms full of roses, and had seen Suellen deposited all red and squirmy on the couch, right in the drawing room, and had taken one look and had gone away, never never to return. "Not that I blame her," Suellen said, "because I'm not at all good-looking,—am I, Kit?" And her words would trail off, in a sort of desperate yearning that I, a child, too, ten years old, could not fathom or comfort. And of course Suellen *wasn't* good-looking then, with her strange hungry asking eyes, and her way of looking poor and forlorn dressed in somebody's borrowed clothes, Bluebell's or Bluebell's little girl's,—when her own closets were full...

"Well!" her father would say, meeting Suellen on the street in town, "Upon my word, is this my daughter, this little *waif*?"

Looking back on it now I know that Suellen's inferiority complex caused her to get religion too; religion, that at eight or ten years old prepared her for the Real Thing, later when her soul grew up. But her inferiority complex caused her to act awfully silly too, we used to feel; because one day Suellen walked up the aisle and joined the Presbyterian Church, and in a few months she felt inferior because of the Presbyterians, for some reason of her own, and joined the Baptists; and then because of the First Communion girls she felt inferior again, and tried the Catholic Church, only this was too complicated, and she gave it up. We all felt that God got terribly provoked with Suellen, and I'm sure the town-folk did too, and her teachers. "Poor Suellen," people said. "Really, something must be done."

But it was a darling town we lived in, and the river made people lazy; and so for the most part we laughed and shrugged, and put up with Suellen and her ways.

* * *

It was Spring, I remember, that Suellen got religion, I mean *really* this time, the Real Thing. And she fell out of love with Miss Lucy Blade, at one and the same instant. "It was like something suddenly left me cold and bare," Suellen said. "And—sort of *exposed*. And then suddenly something... *alighted* near me, like a bird, something with the feel of *wings*. Only I couldn't see it." And as I looked at Suellen, and envied her to my surprise tears welled in her eyes, and Suellen *crossed* herself, reverently and rapturously,—though our little Catholic friends, when we told them, said that Suellen had no *right*. But Suellen went on and *took* the right anyway, and made the sign of the cross just the same, every chance she got, in school, in the halls between classes, even walking down the street. "Suellen's *crazy*!" we said.

But she got even more crazy as time went by, and one day that spring she and Duckie almost landed in jail (Duckie was Bluebell's little girl, their stylish upstairs colored maid). For Duckie and Suellen sent off for a punchboard full of finger-rings to sell, at ten cents a punch, and a Grand Prize for the one with the lucky number. They sold three punches, I think (I bought one), and then got tired and gave the rest away, even the Grand Prize which wasn't so very grand, just a bracelet made of tin. And then Suellen and Duckie began to get letters from the firm. They were form-letters, but bitter, and each one was stronger, more bitter than the last, and the firm began to threaten the frightened girls with jail. Suellen told one of her biggest stories then. She wrote to the firm and said she was a friend of Suellen's, and that she regretted Suellen couldn't pay the \$1.98 still owed to them, because poor little Suellen was dead, she had died quite suddenly.

That was Suellen that Spring when she was still in love. But after

she got religion, the Real Thing, Suellen changed. Changed, that is, after she bought herself a white dress, and took communion in the Catholic Church.

It was in April one day, I remember, when Suellen sent for me. She took me up to her room. "Kit, I want you to come to my First Communion." Suellen said. I could only stare at her. Then she got out her First Communion things: an exquisite dress, like a fairy's, white slippers and stockings, and a veil. "I shall be a Bride of the Church," Suellen said. I understood how she felt, for I too longed to walk up the beautiful long cathedral aisle, holding a candle in my hand, with God waiting to receive me and with incense in a cloud around my face. . . . I stood and looked at Suellen. "But you are a *Methodist*," I said. "Or whatever it is you are, at present!"

She smiled pitingly, as if she shared with God a secret the rest of us could only guess. "God has called me into the Catholic faith," Suellen said.

The little Catholic girls, our friends, were shocked when they heard about it. "You don't know all we've been through,—Catechism and *everything*. You can't just go up and make your First Communion in cold *blood*,—why God-the-Father might strike you *dead*!"

Poor Suellen! She had a hard time buying herself a rosary, because the older sister of one of the little First Communion Girls kept the Catholic shop behind the church. So Suellen made a rosary for herself. She bought three long strings of pearls from the five-and-ten cent store, and looped them together, and hung a crucifix upon them. She needed more prayers than the others, Suellen explained to me.

Now, I have said that Suellen fell out of love. Well, in a way that is misleading. Because Suellen somehow got religion and love all mixed up, and still being in love with Miss Lucy, in a way, she invited Miss Lucy to come and see her make her First Communion in her white dress, her hair curled under the veil, the pearls clutched in her fingers.

And Suellen went through with it, somehow, for I saw her myself with my own two eyes, and Miss Lucy saw her, because we went to the church to see, and stood waiting inside the vestibule; and suddenly, there was Suellen, as lovely, as consecrated as the rest, so that we had to look twice and keep on looking to realize it was she. And once more I envied her, envied the beauty of her face, and her curious asking eyes, and the beauty of the Catholic Church; and I longed for Suellen's brazenness and wished that I too were walking up that aisle, in love with God.

But before the procession started a dreadful thing happened at the door, near the Holy Water font, where the little girls were lined up. "*Suellen!*" You could hear the shocked whisper in the street outside, and in the pews. "Suellen, you're a bad, bad girl. You can't go up the aisle, you and your imitation pearls! Why, Suellen, you want to sin,

and you want *us* to sin . . . here in the sanctuary!" And then as Suellen turned upon them, as I knew she would, the fire mounting in her eyes, and as Miss Lucy stepped forward to remonstrate, the imitation rosary broke, and the imitation pearls scattered in every direction, under the pews and under the beautiful Blessed Virgin's feet; and there was a mad scramble, and some said Miss Lucy fainted, and a few pearls were recovered and pressed into Suellen's hand; and Suellen picked up the crucifix, tears of anger and shame in her eyes. But when quiet was restored, before anyone could do a thing, she marched up the aisle with the others, as brazen and proud as you please, so it's a wonder the saints in their niches didn't turn their faces to the wall. And after that every now and then, for months, someone would find one of Suellen's imitation pearls lying under a pew, all mashed into a sticky paste, or in a crack of the marble floor, whole and shiny and just the shape and size of the tablets poor Miss Lucy kept, to swallow behind a sheet of music, or her waving palmetto fan in school. And for months, and years it seemed to me, when there was nothing else to do, we would go and look for Suellen's pearls.

Yes, Suellen got by with it. That is, she wasn't dismissed from the altar that day, and whatever arrangement was made, or understanding come by, or compromise agreed upon, was between Suellen and Father Joseph, the priest; and between Father Joseph and God. For a few, near enough to see and hear, said later that they distinctly *saw* Father Joseph lay his hand on Suellen's head, and saw him give her the Bread and Wine, and heard him as he talked to God, words not in the ritual, people said . . . beautiful words to remember.

But soon after that the nuns and the priest, Father Joseph, and the Baptist and Methodist ministers, and the choir leaders, and Suellen's music teacher, Miss Lucy Blade, met in conference over Suellen; and my mother insisted on sitting in on it (this was before the day of the Parent-Teacher business), as a sort of mediator, Mother said. And: "Father," she'd say, turning to the priest . . . And then: "Oh, but Brother *McCain*!" this to the Baptist minister,—Father, Brother, Father, Sister, two hours of this, and more! It was a lively session, Mother said, although it accomplished nothing, in the way of so many conferences. And yet in the end they were all smiling together. "Dear little Suellen!" Sister Bonaventure said. And the Baptist minister, chuckling, held the door open for Sister Bonaventure, and stooped and gallantly pulled her robes loose when they caught in the shrubbery going down the walk.

Well, Suellen after that stayed in love with religion: beautifully and with strange tranquility, and a total absence of sin; yes even lying,—all through that period when the rest of us in our set were falling in and out of love with boys, and with young men in college who wouldn't look at us, and with the heroes of stage and screen, one today and another tomorrow, through High School 'till we were Sweet Sixteen, and off to college.

And somehow, after that, we lost track of Suellen.

* * *

But the reason I'm thinking of this, and raking it out of the past, is because not long ago Suellen wrote me a letter, and asked me to come and visit her. And in the letter Suellen said: "Do you remember, Kit, when I took my First Communion? How wonderful Father Joseph was! And the nuns were wonderful too. And God was wonderful, not striking me dead. Well, I'm a Methodist now, in more or less good standing, and maybe for keeps,—who knows! And Staff is a Methodist too (Staff is Suellen's husband). But I have brought along with me through the years a little of every church, of every faith I have ever loved, and especially the Catholic. And I have fashioned a little chapel in my house, and all of them are in it, Kit, and you and me and all I ever knew.

P. S. I plan when you come to give a bridge-luncheon for you, or would you prefer a tea?"

And then at the end of the letter, on a separate sheet of paper, there was another postscript: "Dearest Kit," Suellen wrote. "Honey, how you ever put up with me! Well, you'll be glad to know I'm a Perfectly Normal Person now, and very, very happy. I hear you have two children. Well, I have five, a *brood*. Five, to guide through the heartaches and ecstasies of religion, and falling in love. . . . Come, let's talk things over, you and me. . . ."

And so I am going to visit Suellen, and Suellen's husband and her brood,—because through her I hope to recapture something out of my childhood, lost to me; something of a lovely town that I lived in once, a town lovelier and more gracious, more worldly too, and yes, *sophisticated*, than the places and times I know today.

And because I would like to take Suellen a present I plan to go to that Church, some day soon, when it is empty; past the Holy Water font, where I shall dip my fingers. And I shall stand inside the church, and get down on my hands and knees and *look*. And perhaps in a crack of the marble floor, where a sunbeam will seek it out, or beside a column, or under a pew, I shall find an imitation pearl. And I shall whisper a prayer for my Baptist and Episcopal kin, and a prayer for Jew and gentile, and a very special prayer for Father Joseph, the priest.

And still on my knees I shall take a bobby-pin out of my new permanent, and prize the pearl out of the crack, and put it in a little velvet box,—for my friend Suellen, with love. . . .



TWO POEMS

TO PETER VIERECK

In your groping for utterance
your jagged poetic fingernails
have nicked the hard edge of life
and a bit of the centre shows through.

In your struggle with words...*for* words
you must have known adolescents' terror
in finding that words in themselves
mean so little yet so much.

So you took the crackly husks of poetry,
these troublesome formations of letters,
and blew them away from the seed
with fluid draughts of knowing.
You planted the seeds in fertile fields—
poems?

What are poems, Peter Viereck—
those awkward pieces of perfection which you write?
What is poetry—
your straggling lines which almost speak your mind?
Yes, that is poetry, Peter Viereck.

ON READING FINNEGAN'S WAKE

And he took his torntongue fire
and burnt up words.
No one language could contain him
so he burnt up words.
As Dedalus could but destroy
so he could not create
but grovel in the brilliant ashes
of a language he almost killed,
babble in the cold cinders of genius.
If only he had been less brilliant—
if only he had still been searching
 for an answer
 for an expression
 for a purpose
but instead he almost killed a language.

—*Albert Paris Leary*

ESSAY ON CARL SANDBURG

Vaudeville Bandit of Poetry,
Verse Maker, Yawper of Words,
Player with Facts and Nation's Why-Asker;
Turbulent, rowdy, bombastic,
Poet of the Tall Smoke Stacks:

They tell me you are radical, and I believe them; for I have heard your rantings to push the world where you think it should go.
And they tell me you are unjust, and I answer; yes, it is true I have seen your brutality play on prejudice and hate.
And they tell me you are uncouth, and my reply is; into the ante-room of Beauty I have seen you track a ditch digger's mud.
And having answered so, I turn once more to those who sneer at your poetry, and I give them back the sneer and say to them:
Come show me another poet with pen idiomatic scratching so free a nation's soil and proud to steep in its savor.
Seeking always to exhalt the underdog, here is a raucous sandpaper voice rubbed cross-grained against the little soft reformers;
Angry as a volcano disgorging a mountain's roots, tempestuous as a hurricane riding an ocean's back,
 Violent,
 Boisterous,
 Stormy,
 Displosive,
 Head-strong, convulsive, abrupt,
Under the *Smoke and Steel*, both fists a-swing, shouting the bigness of man,
Under the *Slabs of the Sunburnt West*, shouting as a wild sky shouts,
Shouting even as in *Chicago Poems*, whispery-hoarse sometimes, or imagistic,
Shouting *Good Morning, America* and *The People, Yes*—out from the depth of its soil shouting the hope of a nation,
 Shouting!
Shouting the stormy, turbulent, reckless shouts of Life, loving, reforming, redeeming, proud to be Vaudeville Bandit, Verse Maker, Yawper of Words, Player with Facts and Why-Asker to the Nation.

—Raymond H. Carey

Our Dried Voices

By ALBERT PARIS LEARY

A Chapter from O MY PRODIGAL, a novel in progress.

Marcus lit a cigarette and sat very still on the parkbench, trying to count the leaves that fell from a large elm tree across the walk. Yellow they were—flat yellow leaves which whirled, paper helicopters, to the cinder walk.

The sun was fading like an overripe plum into the sourcream horizon and the small boys who had been sailing their boats on the lagoon and skipping stones across its still face were being recalled by nearly identical nurses and packed into respectably dark Cadillacs.

One boy wearing bluejeans bleached to the colour of old bluewhite milk was left alone; he sailed no boat and had stood watching the other boys with little expression on his sharpfeatured face. When he turned around to make sure that no one was watching him he did not see Marcus. Suddenly with an angry gesture, picking up a handful of black cinders, he threw them with all the force of his short arm against the blank visage of the lagoon. Marcus knew—in that blow were all the desperations, angers and furies of youth, the young youth who are so soon to pass by the terror and glory of childhood and meet the terror and decorum of adolescence. In a few seconds the boy walked away wiping at the tears on his face with the cindery palm of one hand.

Marcus smiled a little because he felt so old and wise and hollow. Not hungryhollow, not hollow as when he used to be enchanted by the fairness of reality but hollow with an emptier feeling than ever before. Pulling at the tough leaf which had fallen on his knee, he tried to adjust his back to the iron bars of the rhadamanthine parkbench.

What was this passing of adolescence — the functioning of new organs, the loss of belief and gain of ideals? What did it signify that such names as T. S. Eliot and Peter Viereck were constantly on his lips?

Sometimes when he and his friends were listening to music and heatedly discussing poetry or sex his mind would lead his vagrant thoughts away from the discussion and force his head away too and he would begin to think:

'After such knowledge, what forgiveness?' Part of him would listen to the dear wishedfor voices of his friends; someone was saying that Whitman's writings were prose after all not because of the free form but because of the content. (His closest mind was saying 'Marcus, how should you begin? Where can this lead? Why is it. Anything? Is it only children who know the answers to absolutes? When you were a small child and knew the only *genuine* things were impossibilities didn't you know so much more than now? Wasn't poetry more beautiful when you didn't understand it?') The leatherette phonograph was playing Saint-Saens. *After such knowledge, what forgiveness?*

The voice of God. No, Robert's deep voice was cleaving the buzz in the room. 'Marcus, you seem to know...' *Know?—Aquinas would hate you...* 'I mean you seem to have a lot of answers. When is man at his prime?'

Marcus hesitated for he was not in the smokey room but standing in Muckleman's Confectionery when hungry shadows were lapping at his ankles and eating their way toward his knickerbanded knees. Mister Muckleman was reaching into the counter for a strip of licorice. Marcus turned to see Mister Muckleman's cat run out the front door into the street where it was run over instantly by a small truck. It was then that Marcus knew sadness, the first real sadness that he had ever experienced for this was the going out or away of life and Marcus was just now becoming aware that life had a termination.

He had walked home slowly through the deep snow. As he reached the front of his own flat he stopped and looked up at the lights from the Christmastree inside painting the snow and him with colour and making the spireas glitter; a few houses up the carolers were singing *Lo, How A Rose E'er Blooming*. Thinking of the cat lying in the street and of his mother and of God who stayed behind the organ at church and made music come out, he cried. Tears not because he was bitter or sad any more but because he was growing up and even a small child can tell you that to grow up is to die a little for the older you become the closer into the hands of the Waiting you drift until at last you let them take you.

How could he tell Robert about childhood? the first thing Robert would do would be to call him a coward, romanticist or escapist and run for his volume of psychology. So he said 'When the sex organs are developed fully' and of course Robert and the other boys were satisfied.

So Marcus had gotten up and left the bluesmoke room because Robert was reading *La Putain Respectense* in terrible French and he wanted to be alone with the park. *After such knowledge, what forgiveness?* Then he was sitting on the hard bench and feeling very sorry for himself, thinking that selfmurder was indeed heinous but sometimes practical, he reached back into the past for orthodoxy and found only himself. Then he knew what he must do: he must escape from that past; he

must write down how youth feels about youth and age—and must tell that after such knowledge comes not forgiveness, not guilt but a full sense of knowing that in the past lies Truth and in the future fulfillment of however much of it one has managed to keep during the transitory years.

But as soon as these thoughts bit into his mind he knew that he could never escape the past...and why should he? He would be able to compromise and offer it recompense in the form of occasional sadness.

His shoulders under the plaid shirt shook; he began to cry but couldn't find the tears. He felt all hollow inside.



Three Poems

I

DEATH OF A HARLOT

*Misereatur tui omnipotens Deus
et dimissus peccatis tuis.....
perducat te ad vitam aeternam.*

Harken not to Lust
nor to Avarice Pride nor Envy

Take it from an old sinner, kid!

Listen to the Word and the Rule
O my sisters and Believe
in the Jesus who was Christ

Domine, non sum dignus!

In the Lamb which was sacrificed
In the Blood of the Lamb

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi!

Bless me Father I have sinned
and in sinning have been sinned against

mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa!

And from here to the bleak house
with the red light go my sisters.

Et introibo ad altare Dei,

ad Deum qui laeificat juventutem meam.

II

Dead leaves cover the tired grass
and soon from the sombre sky comes the cold rain
quietly sobbing on its evening rounds.
Autumn brings to me a lonely feeling
that traces the jagged line of remembered hurt.
Night winds whispering softly
remind me of other years
when life was gay and gay and gay.
Memory is frequently regret
and autumn brings too many memories.

III

"Good night, sweet ladies. Good night, good night":
So left my love. His eyes were blue
and bright with unshed tears.
I have not seen him since. My heart
will go with him through all the years,
and in the spring I'll pick rosemary, for remembrance.

—MARY JANE CALLAHAN.



TWO POEMS

I

Heart-Flower

In my yard is a white rose,
Organism of the night,
Sickly sweet, growing in paths
Of silver moon-rays,
Beautiful, laced with thorns, exuding Hate.

Watching it from my window,
I think of the steel of a bayonet,
Cold, tickling my heart, chilling the beat,
Demanding respect, no, worship,
And offering only pain.

A virgin rose, it thrives
In a precise ground,
Fertile with indecision,
Rich in illusions,
Poor in stuff creating will,
More a weed than a flower.
More a vine than a bush,

Living on jealousy, fed
With spasmodic love and stagnant passion,
It needles, not content to guard,
Parmeates eternal passiveness
With spiney fingers
To poison the flesh
Haughty is my white rose, and potent,
Possessed of a narcotic gorgeousness,
And evil arrogance—
“Bumblebee, fly, I have no honey!”

* * *

I tore a petal last night and my rose bled.

II

Apology To a New Critic

You pick this phrase and then you say to me,
“What means this thing?”

I murmur something about Immortality.
How should I know? I only wrote it.
I did not hear it from the pulpit,
Or Pravda or from the Chinese Plate.

It was whispered to me by a pussy willow sprout
Held close to my ear;
(It promised to return next year.)
It was sighted from the midst
Of a candy-cotton cloud of rosebud trees,
And taught me more ideologies than books ever could.

Have you ever held a dandelion
In the sun, beneath your chin,
And seen reflected butter? (Then you're sweet!)
If you have ever held a bit of Nature
Up to your own soul and seen reflected—God—
Then you know what I am talking about.

—CARL GRANTZ



Bringing Up Edith

By ANN BYRNE

The increase in literary stature experienced by Edith Sitwell, of the Writing Sitwells of England, has not been without accompanying growing pains. Not the least of these is the tendency of current critics to discount her earlier works as unimportant, by virtue of comparison with her later, better poetry.

That Miss Sitwell is undoubtedly the ranking woman poet of England today is evidenced by the fact that she is the only woman since Elizabeth Barrett Browning to be considered as a possible poet laureate. Her chances are somewhat better than Mrs. Browning's, and without doubt, she is more deserving of the title.

Miss Sitwell's poetry has become more than the nostalgic memories of childhood expressed in phrases reminiscent of such imagists as "H. D." Richard Aldington and John Gould Fletcher. Already an accomplished technician, she has gained a depth of feeling in her later subject matter which raises her work to the status of contemporary greatness.

For the grass, rain, hawthorn-blossoms — the child-like symbols shown best in the autobiographical *Troy Park*—she has adopted metaphors on a universal scale. The sun, the Bone, the ape themes recur consistently in her latest, best poetry.

Although the war is not directly mentioned in these last poems, it is apparent that it has much to do with the maturing, enriching change in Miss Sitwell's poetry. "Still Falls the Rain" is the only one which mentions the war in any way approaching directness. Other poems in which its effect is shown are "Lullaby," "Green Song," "An Old Woman," and "Street Song."

The sun in these poems is a symbol of the omniscient force in the world. It is the only good—in "Green Song" the "long and portentous eclipse of the patient sun" is winter, and after that, the Spring. In "Street Song" "... terrible is the sun/As truth." And in "An Old Woman" the sun is "the first lover of the world."

Despair is suggested in "Lullaby" by the line, "The Judas-coloured sun is gone," and heightened by the closing lines, "And with the Ape thou art alone—/Do, /Do."

This second theme, the Ape, is strongly suggestive of Aldous Huxley, whose "First Philosopher's Song," was only the first of many things he wrote on that theme. It recurs in "Green Song" as a reference to "the beast-philosopher." This poem contains the secondary reference to the sun—"that sun the heart."

"With the age-old wisdom and aptness of the Ape" is the way "Man's threatening shadow. . . . crouched." in "Street Song."

The Bone is perhaps the symbol of the material, the earthly body—which must be shielded by a heart—a mind or intellect and emotion. The "envious ghost in the Spring world" of "Green Song" seems to me the exact opposite of the traditional conception of a ghost—it has a body, but "I have no heart to shield my bone/But with the world's cold am alone—/And soon your heart, too, will be gone—"

The feeling of the new being built on the wreckage of the old is another of the veiled allusions to the war, found in "Street Song." "The pulse that beats in the heart is changed to the hammer/ That sounds in the Potter's Field where they build a new world from our Bone, . . ." And before that, "Love my heart for an hour, but my bone for a day—/ At last the skeleton smiles, for it has a morrow:"

The despair of the world is unrelieved in "Lullaby," which ends on the note of the Ape, but youth is the only hope in "Green Song." Between the two is the "Street Song"—"And summer is lonely."

One of the words used most frequently to describe Miss Sitwell's characteristic poetry was "baroque." Her style has changed in inverse relation to the complexity of her subject matter. The emotions are deeper and the subject matter more comprehensive; therefore she has abandoned to a great extent her esoteric technique for a simpler one.

As late as 1941 critics were saying about Edith Sitwell, "She writes sharp, hard, colorful poetry that gives the impression of viridian green and Chinaman's-heart's-blood laid on in arabesque by a razor blade." (Time, March 3, 1941).

This is no longer true. The brittle touch is gone. In her last-published book of poetry, *A Song of the Cold*, Miss Sitwell assumes in regal splendor her position—self-assumed—of prophetess, sibyl. Still speaking in a somewhat cryptic style, she has nevertheless substituted a directness never found in her early, "baroque" work.

But make no mistake: although Edith Sitwell's later work is deeper, although it has inspired José Garcia Villa, with the other writers who dedicated to her a memorial volume of poetry and criticism, to call her the "voice of England," it should not make us discount as insignificant her early poetry.

Just as one poet is not completely forgotten because another poet does more important work than he does, so the early autobiographical poetry of Edith Sitwell should not be totally obscured by the blinding brilliance of today's Edith Sitwell.

Certainly "Lullaby" is a far cry from her esoteric reminiscences of Dagobert and Peregrine—known to you and to me as Osbert and Sacheverell Sitwell, her brothers—in "Colonel Fantock" and other poems.

centenary Reviews

Notes Towards the Definition of Culture by T. S. Eliot

(Harcourt and Brace, \$2.50)

Mr. Eliot's latest book is very much under the influence of the Book of Common Prayer and yet more in the tradition of the Kiplings and Tennysons; however, *Notes Towards The Definition of Culture* points to a more worthy end; it is insular only in its flavour; it is nationalistic only in the examples used to illustrate his theses. Mr. Eliot has written in a prose style simple enough for any child or highschool English teacher to comprehend.

Some people will no doubt read into this monumental little book certain political principles of which Mr. Eliot is not exactly guilty, certain ideas which he would probably abhor. He states that 'culture' is the manifestation of religion; or, that a nation's culture is the incarnation of a nation's religion practised. (Then he turns about and apologises for the use of such a strong word. . .) He further states that individual culture and group culture developed fully and unconsciously and blended with the end result of religion form the overall culture of a society. That this is true, few could deny. What most readers will find fault with is the insistence that group membership (the individual groups are called *élites* regardless of rank) must gradually become hereditary.

Mr. Eliot has done a great service toward humanity: at last here is a man who writes that it would be wrong to do away with one's enemies either before or after a victory—not only for moral reasons but because out of friction comes culture and if the friction be destroyed then some of the means to obtain the end (culture) would be destroyed. He has also given the most or the only cogent refutation of world government proposals by saying very simply that since individual nations' cultures blend to form world culture the latter would be destroyed if, again, the means be removed.

In short—here is a most radical book conceived along moral and artistic lines; it cannot be termed reactionary—any staid conservative would be shocked to discover that if he is not intellectual he will belong to an elite, not necessarily lower in rank, but one to which less honours and privileges would be given. This book is gravely in error in places; but it is the nearest thing to a definition and defence of culture (And 'culture' is spoken of here in Mr. Eliot's definition) which has appeared in our time. The important point to consider is this: his political and sociological principles are secondary; Mr. Eliot has set out to define 'culture'; he must be judged only according to his success or failure to do so.

—A. P. L.

Terror and Decorum by Peter Viereck (Scribner's, \$3.00)

This volume of poetry represents eight years of work by America's most fabulous young poet, Peter Viereck, who has justly been named Pulitzer Poetry Prize winner of 1949. In 106 pages Viereck has proven the ability between the tip of his pen and the top of his head to picture just what he pleases in any poetical form or fashion, using middle English ("Ballad of The Jollie Gleeman"), or the language of a child ("I Am Dying, Egypt, Dying"); the cool realism of "Vale From Carthage" or the metaphysical "Why Can't I Live Forever?" It is this quality which makes the book an exciting whole. Each turn of the page brings a new experience of humor, pathos, despair, with no one poem particularly resembling its mates.

"Kilroy," published under the title of "Kilroy Was Here" in the *Atlantic Monthly*, is Viereck's best known work, the one that really brought him to light. It reflects in us the eternal desire for adventurous wandering, and in four little stanzas creates the scope of all past, future and the universe. . . . "For 'Kilroy' means: the world is very wide."

Each line the poet creates has strength and meat; nothing is half-said, and he has so much to say!

"(Listen, when the high bells ripple the half-light:
Ideas, ideas, the tall ideas dancing.)" from "Incantation"

"This death is stronger than our life." —from "Poet"

"The night is softer than the dark is satin.
. . . The night is stiller than the dark is dead."
—from "The Day's No Rounder Than Its Angles Are"

"For heaven and hell are childhood playmates still."
—from "For Two Girls Setting Out In Life"

"...singers wear
Neurosis like new roses when they sing."
from "The Four Stages of Craftsmanship"

"Where memory's white peacock struts as king."
—from "Convoy From New York"

Perhaps the strongest poem in the collection is "Crass Times Redeemed By Dignity of Souls," under the title of which the author has made this note: "...Lines in memory of the humanistic ideals of my brother, Corporal George S. Viereck, Jr., killed in action by the Nazis in 1944." It is here he gives his rather dark philosophy of life: that the struggles of this world are justified only by the dignity of the soul of man, his search for that dignity.

Peter Viereck, intellectual, poet, a man who does not have merely the ability to create, but the power to bend that ability to his skilled will, offers you his well named *Terror and Decorum*. —M. A. B.

The Midsummer Fires by James Aswell (Morrow \$3.00)

I

'Man can live without bread, drink, love, pride; the only indispensable is memory.

'He backs across his tightwire of time, faster, faster, faster, peering always rapt at the glittering streak he has traversed. He backs heedless into the myth of hope, knowing the future can gain substance only by running under his soft, cloven shoes and becoming the past.'

With these lines ends one of the most startling books written in America in the last five years, *The Midsummer Fires*, by James Aswell. In this novel he lays open for examination the mind and actions of a forty-one year old commercial artist, Gael Ring, who discovers that he is growing impotent. In a manner which is almost reminiscent of the treatment given the searching mind of Eugene Gant, Mr. Aswell's rather cunning pen has created one of the pitifully few novels of literary distinction written in America for the last few years; he accomplishes this by probing in Gael Ring's mind during the period in which the realization first comes upon him. The horror, terror, feeling of futility and desperation is conveyed to the reader in lines which seem easy and fresh—compared with the overcolourful historical novels of Costain and Shellabarger. One tires of pirate ships, treasure caravans, concealed stilettos, and Duncan Phyfe seductions; it is a genuine pleasure to get back to the Twentieth Century, to read of men and women one might have known, to see that our world has stories to be told and conditions to be laughed at, scathed or revealed. One tires of the Renaissance and a bed per page.

II

Mr. Aswell left in a few places a somewhat muddled condition of flashback technique which is not as clear as might have been. In the part which takes place in New Orleans one must sometimes turn back a page to follow closely.

Insofar as the more intimate parts are concerned, this must be said in their defence (if any be needed): each scene and treatment of Gael and his wife, Anne, is done with taste, delicacy, and what is more pleasing, with a great deal of truth, both literary and realistic.

It is in a few relatively minor passages that the frankness is carried to what some might consider an extreme. However, it was Mr. Aswell's purpose to give a clear picture of this Gael Ring and his troubles, all of which stem directly or indirectly from his growing impotency. His work, his relationship with his wife, his attitude toward friends and the attitude which he provokes from other characters in the novel to himself could not have been analyzed so carefully if mere prudishness or some faint notion of bygone literary criteria had been allowed to interfere with

the portrait. After all, once it was the middleclass style to call Hemingway, Joyce and O'Neil 'vulgar and obscene.'

III

It is perhaps an injustice to an author to state that in his book he is under the influence of another writer; especially when he has no doubt arrived at his own style by painstaking and tedious labour; yet it might not be depreciative to this book to compare it with other books which it brings to mind:

The merciless vivisection of each phase of Gael Ring's decline and rise is reminiscent of 'A Farewell To Arms'; his insistence on frankness in relation to Gael's creative endeavours might have been thoughts of James Joyce—although far from his style.

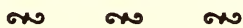
IV

What is most pleasing about the novel, *The Midsummer Fires*, is that it is one of the very few steps forward in craftsmanship in American fiction since *The Enormous Room* and *Eimi* of e. e. cummings, the earlier novels of Earnest Hemingway, and the now unreasonably dated works of F. Scott Fitzgerald. Here is a book with a Southern locale which does not reek of magnolias and Florida Water; the houses are not all whitecolumned but modern to the latest built-in bed; an inference of 'Suh' does not begin each paragraph; the Negro maid is neither 'Mammy' nor a pancakeless Aunt Jemima.

To the Southerner whose mind is still entangled in Spanish moss, rusty cries of 'On to Gettysburgh' and crossed sabres *The Midsummer Fires* must indeed seem a shocking book. To a reader, a Southerner perhaps, who believes that the South of today is good for tomorrow too, the novel is worthy of the man whose name is affixed as author.

It has its faults certainly—the overmelodramatic situation in which the little girl, Bili, is killed and some of the flashbacks. But here is the work, not of a new 'Southern' writer (And what a despicable term that is!, but of an American writer whose book will have the same dynamic appeal to any reader whose language is English and whose mind is mature.

—A. P. L.



"A Tree of Night" by Truman Capote (Random House, \$2.75)

This is a collection of eight short stories by the twenty-four year old Louisianian who wrote last year's provocative novel *Other Voices, Other Rooms*. This, his first book, caused competent critics both here and abroad immediately to compare him, not unfavorably, with the earlier works of Flaubert, Proust and Poe. These extravagant comparisons seem to have been justified by his second book, *A Tree of Night*.

Five of the stories had been previously published by various periodicals. Indeed, it was through some of these stories, published in *Story* and *Mademoiselle* a few years ago, that the unusual talent of Truman Capote was recognized. The shock of recognition first occurred to Cyril Connolly, noted editor of England's *Horizon*. When Connolly came to America last year he said, "Take me to Truman Capote, with the exception of Faulkner, the only individual in America who can write." The American critics were not quite as enthusiastic, though at least one, the Associated Press' W. G. Rogers, nominated *Other Voices, Other Rooms* for the Pulitzer Prize.

Capote was born in 1925 on a plantation near New Orleans. He spent his early years in that city and has also lived in Alabama and Connecticut. In 1942 he went to New York and worked for *The New Yorker* as an accountant, but he was transferred to the art department when it was discovered that he couldn't subtract. From art he walked into great literature as other men walk into their own homes.

The first story in the collection, "Master Misery," subtly shows the sincere sensitivity of the author. It is constructed with the craftsmanship of a Maugham retaining the delicacy of the later short stories of Cather. It also is indicative of the highly imaginative stories that follow.

If one accept the premise of Harold March that, "There are two worlds, one the world of time, where necessity, illusion, suffering, change, decay, and death are the law; the other the world of eternity, where there is freedom, beauty, and peace. Normal experience is in the world of time, but glimpses of the other world may be given in moments of contemplation or through accidents of involuntary memory. It is the function of art to develop these insights and to use them for the illumination of life in the world of time," if one believe this, then I believe it will follow that Capote will be accepted as a mature artist of considerable significance.

To my mind, the story "Children on Their Birthdays" is Capote's best example to date of the development of insight into the world of beauty. In this story he is absolutely sure of himself and consequently he writes with the imaginary finesse of a Chekhov. There seem to be instances in which he is not as familiar with his subject as he might be, and his writing suffers in proportion. But never does he write poorly. I doubt if he *could* write poorly. He is a born writer. . . "By now it was almost nightfall, a firefly hour, blue as milkglass; and birds like arrows swooped together and swept into the folds of trees. Before storms, leaves and flowers appear to burn with a private, light color, and Miss Bobbit, got up in a little white skirt like a powderpuff and with strips of gold-glittering tinsel ribboning her hair, seemed, set against the darkening all around, to contain this illuminated quality. She held her arms arched over her head, her hands lily-limp, and stood

straight up on the tips of her toes. She stood that way for a good long while, and Aunt El said it was right smart of her"; again "It was supper-time, and, not knowing where to eat, he paused under a street lamp that, blooming abruptly, fanned complex light over stone; while he waited there came a clap of thunder, and all along the street every face but two, his and the girl's, tilted upward. A blast of river breeze tossed the children's laughter as they, linking arms, pranced like carousel ponies, and carried the mama's voice who, leaning from a window, howled: rain, Rachel, rain-gonna rain gonna rain! And the gladiola, ivy-filled cart jerked crazily as the peddler, one eye slanted skyward, raced for shelter. A potted geranium fell off, and the little girls gathered the blooms and tucked them behind their ears. The blending spatter of running feet and raindrops tinkled on the xylophone sidewalks—the slamming of doors, the lowering of windows, then nothing but silence, and rain. Presently, with slow scraping steps, she came below the lamp to stand beside him, and it was as if the sky was a thunder cracked mirror, for the rain fell between them like a curtain of splintered glass." For me, this is as close to poetry as it is to prose; it is also why I believe Capote is better at description than dialogue. He possesses an introvertive imagination of a Gothic nature that makes his writing more Decadent than Classical and makes him more akin to late Nineteenth century French writers than Twentieth century American writers. This rare quality also places his collection of short stories with those of Mansfield, Woolf and Bowman in England, and Faulkner, Porter and Welty in America.

—W. S. G.



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THIS ISSUE . . .

Lee Richard Hayman is a young Cleveland poet. He has published in numerous literary magazines including *Antioch Review*, *Saturday Review of Literature*, *Golden Goose*, *Cronos* and others.

Retep Kcereiv Setisreht, who sometimes signs himself "Peter Viereck" is this year's Pulitzer Prize Winner for Poetry and one of the most important of the new poets. He displays in his poem on page 23 an amazing faculty for selfcriticism. At present he is in Europe on a Guggenheim Fellowship, writing, as he says, "another (better) book."

Julia B. Meyer lives in Shreveport where she and her husband own the city's largest bookstore. From time to time she enrolls in a course at Centenary College where she and the *Venture* group have formed a profitable association.

J. C. Crews lives in Taos, New Mexico, edits *The Flying Fish*, a digest of "Little Magazine" operations, and considers, as he writes us, "the Spender-Auden influence to be the worst influence on American poetry in a hundred years." He is married, has an infant daughter and has published his work in many literary reviews.

Mason Jordan Mason, the young poet from Waco, Texas, needs little introduction to readers of reviews and other literary magazines. At present he is in Palestine.

Richard Kirk has been spoken of as the best epigrammatical poet in the United States. He has published in *Saturday Review of Literature*, *Harper's*, *Scribner's* and a host of other magazines. He is the author of two books, *A Tallow Dip* and *Short Measures*. He taught for many years at Tulane University and now resides in Michigan.

Albrecht B. Strauss, one of the newest and most valuable additions to *Venture*, is at Harvard studying for his Doctorate in English. He was educated in Germany, England and completed requirements for his Master's Degree at Tulane University. His father, Doctor Bruno Strauss, is professor of German at Centenary College.

Rosa Zagnoni Marinoni is one of the most interesting women of letters in this section of the country; she resides at *Villa Rosa* in Fayetteville, Arkansas, and has published in *Saturday Review of Literature*, *Good Housekeeping*, *The New York Times*, *Kaleidograph* and numerous literary magazines such as *The North American Review*.

(Continued on page 59)

ORIGINAL SIN

by

CLEANTH BROOKS

Robert Penn Warren's reputation as a novelist—particularly since the publication of his brilliant Pulitzer Prize novel *All the King's Men*—has come to overshadow his reputation as a poet. This is natural in view of the fact that the novel as a form is rather widely available to us; poetry as a form, much less widely available. For many a reader Warren turns out to be a "modern" poet, which means that to a reader, he is an obscure and difficult poet. But he happens to be—in spite of the average reader's bias against modern poetry—a very fine poet. It is that reader's loss ultimately, if the reader is debarred from the poetry.

This is not the place to explore the problem of the "difficulty" of modern poetry: that is a complex problem and will lead us into consideration of general historical questions of all kinds, most of them remote from either Warren's fiction or poetry. It might, on the whole, be more interesting to look closely at one of Warren's finest poems, "Original Sin: a Short Story," and try to see what it is "about," and how its theme is related to the basic themes of Warren's novels.

It is not an easy poem, though we shall find that it is certainly not needlessly obscure. The title itself may be thought to aid our understanding of it; and help, it does. But it will not take us very far, and it *can* be a positive distraction if we try to make it a shortcut to the poem's meaning. We had better take the subtitle ("A Short Story") seriously enough to submit ourselves to the narrative. If we do so, real attention to the narrative may yield us, indirectly, "what the poem says."

It is the story of a man's attempt to shake off a nightmare and his failure to do so. But what is the nightmare? If we merely clap the placard "original sin" on it (whether we take our conception of original sin from Calvin or Aquinas), we will have simply constructed a rather thin allegory. To be sure, Calvin, St. Thomas, and even perhaps Dr. Freud, may perhaps be of help; but the poem is no mechanical allegory, and if we let any of our authorities divert us from an exploration of the poem itself, we shall have missed the poem.

Let me be perfectly explicit here: the poet has done the work for us, but he has done it in the poet's way: that is, he has provided us with his poem. He has *not* furnished us with a digest, a paraphrase of his poem. He can write the poem for us, but he cannot read it for us: that is the irreducible minimum of work left to us as readers—if we are to participate in the poem and not merely be told about it.

The nightmare has a great head, but it is an empty head: it rattles "like a gourd." And its nodding, we soon come to realize, is not a gesture of intelligence, a nod of recognition or assent. It is merely the bobbing of the awkwardly carried, too-heavy head. For the nightmare is as witness as a hydrocephalic child. It cannot form words: it whimpers or mews: its hand is "childish and unsure" as it clutches "the bribe of chocolate or a toy you used to treasure." The abnormality of the head runs through even the second stanza with its evocation of grandpa on the veranda in Omaha. For grandpa's head had a wen, which he used to finger, to your wondering amazement — something that you didn't have — "a precious protuberance" which set him apart from ordinary people and from you.

You knew the nightmare when you were a child. It belonged, with grandpa, to that childhood world. But grandpa was dead, and you were no longer a child. That was why you were shocked when it turned up in Harvard Yard. But part of the shock was how, whimpering and imbecilic, it could ever have made the journey. Perhaps grandpa's will paid the ticket — perhaps it was thus an unasked legacy from grandpa. At any rate, it was there; and in your first homesickness, you were almost glad to see it. Hideous though it was, you were almost kindly to it. But your kindness has nothing to do with its ubiquity. It followed you whether you felt kindly or loathed it: you could not shake it off. This is presumably what "at last you understood": that nothing is ever lost; that the past cannot be escaped.

If the poem were to end here, we might be tempted to say that the nightmare merely stands for the past: the monstrous and irrational world of the child's nightmare. But the poem does not end here, and the stanzas that follow go on to develop and refine the symbol.

Irrational as it is — imbecilic as it is, the nightmare observes what amounts to a gentlemanly code. It is willing to remain decently private. It forebears to shame you before your friends. Obviously it has nothing to do with your public experiences; what is more surprising, it has nothing to do with your private reformation either. If it were merely your memories of the past, it might be expected to appear on these occasions at least.

We shall do well to observe the other occasions on which, according to the protagonist, it does not appear. It does not appear at the moment of apparent intellectual vision nor at emotional crises: not at the experience of poignant — too poignant beauty — the "lyric arsenical meadows — Where children call"; nor at the pang of Gethsemane agony — the "orchard anguish"; nor even at the moment of full horror, when horror has come to fruition and hangs like a heavy ripened fruit, asking to be tasted, to be gorged. The nightmare is absent from these occasions as it is absent from your calculated prudence, those axioms by which you live, or pretend to yourself that you live.

It was deceptively absent when you made the brave resolution to begin again, to found yourself on a new innocence. At that moment of insight, you saw with full clarity that we are betrayed by the multiplicity of experience itself. We must resolve not to allow ourselves to be distracted by that multiplicity, even though it may be rich and glorious. We must have better charts: we must strictly adhere to the charts, else our purposes become confused and are swallowed up by the welter of our multiform world. Yet, after you have made your calculations, after all the "timetables, all the maps," there the nightmare was, standing in the twilight clutter of "always, always, or perhaps." The crepuscular clutter may seem a different sort of confusion from that of the "sun-torment of whitecaps." But both are multiplicity, though one is sunlit, the other twilit. The prediction does somehow go awry; calculation miscalculates. The confidently voiced proposition has to be revised downward from an assertion of truth to an assertion of probability — the confident *always* has to give way to the lame *perhaps*.

And so the nightmare, we see, is not merely the ghost of the past: it is evidently associated with the contingent element in our universe which renders the best time-table inaccurate, the most carefully surveyed map, defective. In a world which aspires to a certain neat precision, contingency is a nightmare, subhuman in its lack of purpose conscious, slovenly with its unekmpt locks "like seaweed strung on the stinking stone." For the nightmare inhabits a world which defies the clean, logical ordering of our daylight, waking world. It is monstrous and irrational: the timetable can find no place for it.

But we have not finished the poem yet — or to put it more accurately, the poem has not finished with us. For the last two stanzas make a further enrichment of the symbol and suggest how the two main aspects of the symbol — its connection with the past and its connection with the contingent — are related. In developing this relationship, they account for the title of the poem, "Original Sin", with its suggestion that man is dowered from birth with some inner propensity toward error, some pervision of will, from which his own will can never deliver him. (I do not mean to press the theological analogy here. The poem itself does not press it. That is, the poem does not lean on the doctrine: it constitutes an independent dramatization of an experience — though I grant that this drama may throw some light on the doctrine and may in turn receive some illumination from it.)

To return to the poem, however: What is the "sly pleasure" which comes from the death of friends — a pleasure to which in his honesty, the speaker confesses? Why does such news bring pleasure? Because, even in the midst of one's sorrow, there comes a "sense of cleansing and hope." One more link with the past has been broken; and with the sense of cleansing, comes hope — the sense of a fresh start. But "it" has not died. Just then it appears, with the child's innocence, which is

not an aseptic innocence. It is the irrational you,— “clutching a toy you used to treasure” — the you that can not be disowned even though there is now one less friend in whom that irrational you is known and familiar.

But the nightmare comes to you, not in the glare of full day, nor even in the glare of full consciousness — it comes to you, most often, in the twilight fringe of consciousness. Half asleep, you hear it fumble at the lock. You know that it is in the house. Later, you may hear it wander from room to room. It moves about “Like a mother who rises at night to seek the childhood picture,” or it “stands like an old horse cold in the pasture.” To what do the comparisons point? They occur in climactic position in the poem? What do they have to tell us?

If we look back through the poem we find that “it” has been compared to a child, to an imbecile, to an animal (though a faithful domestic animal like the old hound or the old horse), and now, to the mother. All of these types of subrationality or irrationality; for even the mother acts in disregard of — or in excess of — the claims of rationality. The picture will keep until daylight; it will be the easier found by daylight. But, obsessed with her need, she rises at night to fumble patiently through the darkened rooms. It is a childhood picture. The child has presumably left the house — has perhaps long since become a man, and put away childish things. But the mother yearns toward the child that was. There is no use in reasoning with her, for her claim transcends reason; and, anyway she will be happier left to her search.

But the things to which the nightmare is compared have something else in common: none of them has anything to do with the realm of practical affairs. The child and the idiot obviously do not have. But neither does the mother, the hound, or the horse. They are all superannuated: the old hound snuffing at the door, the old horse turned out to pasture, the mother living in the past. The reference to the timetables and the maps is relevant after all, for maps and timetables are the instruments of action, abstract descriptions of our world in which the world is stripped down to be acted upon; and all action has a future reference. Yet, the future grows out of the past, and is, we may say if we think in terms of pure efficiency, always contaminated by the past. Our experiments never work out perfectly because we can never control all the conditions: we never have chemically pure ingredients, a perfectly clean testube, absolutely measured quantities. Most of all, we ourselves are not clean testubes.

The new innocence, for which the speaker, bewildered by the sun-torment of whitecaps, cries out, would be aseptic, scientifically pure; but we ourselves are never that. Animal man, instinctive man, passionate man — these represent deeper layers of our nature than does rational man. Considered from the standpoint of pure rationality, these subrational

layers are, as we have seen, a contamination, something animal — or actually worse than animal, imbecilic, an affront to our pride in reason. But it is in these subrational layers that our highest values, loyalty, patience, sympathy, love are ultimately rooted. These virtues are not the constructions of pure rationality. And so the comparisons with which the poem ends — to the mother unreasonably yearning past reason for the childhood picture and to the old horse, patient in the cold pasture — are relevant after all.

I have interpreted the poem as a critique of rationality, I have perhaps oversimplified it in attempting to show that the poem makes such a criticism — makes it indirectly, but makes it surely, nonetheless, and that therefore it has something of immense importance to say to us, and most of all to us who live in the age of atomic bomb when the vaunt of pure rationality has risen to a crescendo.

But I should be unfair to the poem if I ended my account of it with such emphasis. For this poem is not a tract or sermon. It is a poem, which means that it has its own drama. It is too good a poem, moreover, for its meaning to be detached from its drama.

The dramatic tension is maintained throughout the poem: the revulsion of horror, the necessary association of the horror with the past, and specifically with one's own past, the false confidence that one has escaped it, the sick realization that one cannot escape it — these are dynamically related to each other. Not least important, one should add, is the speaker's final attitude as the poem closes: I should not describe it as mere passive acceptance; it is certainly more than cynical bitterness. It even contains a wry kind of ironic comfort: the listener drowns off in the consciousness that, moving about or merely patiently waiting, "it" is there, and can be counted upon to remain.

But any paraphrase blurs the richness and complexity of the final attitude. The poet is not telling us *about* the experience: he is *giving* us the experience. For the full meaning, the reader has to be referred to the poem itself. The poem is hard to summarize, not because of its vagueness but because of its precision. "What it says" — the total experience, which includes the speaker's attitude as a part of it — the total experience can be conveyed by no document less precise than the poem itself. The full experience — the coming to terms with reality, or with God, or with one's deepest self, cannot be stated directly, for it is never an abstract description. It can be given to us only dramatically, which means indirectly.

In a sense then the poem constitutes a kind of concrete instance of our problem as well as a statement of it. This poem — and any poem, I should say — makes use of a method of indirection. The truth of a poem does not reside in a formula. It cannot be got at by mere logic. Poetry is incommensurable with charts and timetables. It is a piece of —

perhaps I should say an "imitation" of our fluid and multiform world. That is why fewer and fewer people can read such poems as this. Perhaps if we could read poetry we might understand our plight better: not merely that we could hear what our poets have to tell us about our world: the very fact that we could read the poems itself would testify to an enlargement of our powers of apprehension — would testify to a transcendence of a world abstracted to formula and chart. A growing inability to read poetry conversely testifies to a narrowing of apprehension, to a hardening of the intellectual arteries which will leave us blind to all but that world of inflexible processes and arid formulæ which may be our doom.

ORIGINAL SIN: A SHORT STORY*

by Robert Penn Warren

Nodding, its great head rattling like a gourd,
And locks like seaweed strung on the stinking stone,
The nightmare stumbles past, and you have heard
It fumble your door before it whimpers and is gone:
It acts like the old hound that used to snuffle your door and moan.

You thought you had lost it when you left Omaha,
For it seemed connected then with your grandpa, who
Had a wen on his forehead and sat on the veranda
To finger the precious protuberance, as was his habit to do,
Which glinted in the sun like rough garnet or the rich old brain bulging
through.

But you met it in Harvard Yard as the historic steeple
Was confirming the midnight with its hideous racket,
And you wondered how it had come, for it stood so imbecile,
With empty hands, humble, and surely nothing in pocket:
Riding the rods, perhaps—or grandpa's will paid the ticket.

You were almost kindly then, in your first homesickness,
As it tortured its stiff face to speak, but scarcely mewed;
Since then you have outlived all your homesickness,
But have met it in many another distempered latitude:
Oh, nothing is lost, ever lost! at last you understood.

* From *Selected Poems 1933-1943*, by Robert Penn Warren, copyright 1944, by Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., and used with their permission.

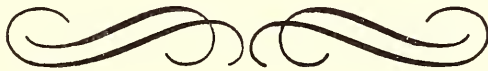
But it never came in the quantum glare of sun
To shame you before your friends, and had nothing to do
With your public experience or private reformation:
But it thought no bed too narrow—it stood with lips askew
And shook its great head sadly like the abstract Jew.

Never met you in the lyric arsenical meadows
When children call and your heart goes stone in the bosom;
At the orchard anguish never, nor ovoid horror,
Which is furred like a peach or avid like the delicious plum.
It takes no part in your classic prudence or fondled axiom.

Not there when you exclaimed: "Hope is betrayed by
Disastrous glory of sea-capes, sun-torment of whitecaps
—There must be a new innocence for us to be stayed by."
But there it stood, after all the timetables, all the maps,
In the crepuscular clutter of *always, always, or perhaps.*

You have moved often and rarely left an address,
And hear of the deaths of friends with a sly pleasure,
A sense of cleansing and hope, which blooms from distress;
But it has not died, it comes, its hand childish, unsure,
Clutching the bribe of chocolate or a toy you used to treasure.

It tries the lock; you hear, but simply drowse:
There is nothing remarkable in that sound at the door.
Later you may hear it wander the dark house
Like a mother who rises at night to seek a childhood picture;
Or it goes to the backyard and stands like an old horse cold in the pasture.



The Poetic Theory of Cleanth Brooks

by

Albrecht B. Strauss

A proper understanding of Mr. Brooks's critical position is contingent, I believe, upon a recognition of the revolutionary zeal with which his system is held. Mr. Brooks, it is important to remember, conceives of himself as a staunch defender of what he considers the third major critical revolution to occur in the history of modern English poetry. The first of these three great critical revolts took place in the seventeenth century concurrently with the rise of the scientific spirit. Bacon and Hobbes were its evil genii. Disparaging the value of poetry, these thinkers deplored the poet's antirationalist magic and relegated him to the position of a merely frivolous dreamer. The results of such an attitude, Mr. Brooks feels, were catastrophic. "The imagination," he writes, "was weakened from a 'magic and synthetic' power to Hobbes's conception of it as the file-clerk of the memory."¹ Metaphor became enfeebled, distinctions between "poetic" and "unpoetic" subject matter arose, didactic considerations were introduced—in short, the intrusion of common sense and naturalism into the realm of poetry brought about that "dissociation of sensibility," from which, according to Mr. T. S. Eliot, "we have never recovered."² In the Romantic Revolt, the second great critical revolution, Mr. Brooks sees an unsuccessful attempt to free the imagination from the strait-jacket which Neo-classicism had imposed upon it. Essentially anti-scientific in orientation, this movement might have succeeded, had it not, rather than discarding altogether the conception of a special "poetic" material, offered new "poetic" objects and persisted in what Mr. Brooks likes to call "the didactic heresy." It remained for modern poets to complete the task left undone by the Romantics. By their refusal to recognize the existence of "poetic" materials and by their concerted effort to fuse the intellectual with the emotional, the Moderns have given expression to their determination to effect a complete liberation of the imagination.

Of this, the third major critical revolution, Mr. Brooks is a violent partisan. We shall do him no injustice, I think, if we interpret his books and articles as one extended defense of contemporary poetic practices. He is a David battling in the cause of modern poetry against the Goliath of academic philistinism. The metaphor is perhaps mis-

¹ Cleanth Brooks, *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1939), p. 52.

² T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays 1917-1932* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1932), p. 247.

leading, for it might suggest the figure of a lonely crusader. Actually, of course, Mr. Brooks is merely bringing down to the level of the man in the street (of whom, he notes somewhere, the average freshman is a reasonable facsimile) a battle that had hitherto been fought in the rarefied atmosphere of the more recondite theorizers. "While Brooks and Warren have brought the New Criticism into the universities," remarks Robert Wooster Stallman, "it is Tate and Ransom who have furnished it with systematic æsthetic studies."³ Mr. Brooks himself readily admits the essentially derivative nature of his position. "Such credit as I may legitimately claim," he observes in the Preface to *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*, "I must claim primarily on the grounds of having possibly made a successful synthesis of other men's ideas rather than on the originality of my own."⁴ Brooks, we must conclude then, is essentially a propagandist for and practitioner of theories that ultimately derive from T. E. Hulme, T. S. Eliot, I. A. Richards, to mention just a few. The battle is being fought on their behalf. It is important to remember this, for, unlike Mr. Brooks himself, his intellectual progenitors frankly recognize the metaphysical and political implications of the system they have evolved. One thinks of T. S. Eliot's latest book, *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, by way of an example. Mr. Brooks does not go that far. He is alive, it is true, to the bearing his doctrines have on "the much advertised demise of the Humanities," but disavows any intention of making a "contribution to the rapidly increasing literature that demands the resuscitation of the Humanities and tells how that resuscitation is to be effected."⁵ Perhaps he is right in thus limiting his scope. His primary task, as he conceives of it, is to defend modern poetry—from Yeats to Eliot. *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* does so by demonstrating, on the basis of analyses of a number of modern poems, that contemporary poets, by taking their inspiration from the metaphysical poets of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, are well within the main stream of the English tradition. In *The Well Wrought Urn* he continues this defense by arguing that the very traits which have generally been associated exclusively with the Donne tradition and which modern poets are said to have artificially revived are in reality present in all great poems. What the precise nature of these traits is we shall have to determine in what follows. For the present, however, we must remind ourselves that implicit in Mr. Brooks's approach are the highly debatable metaphysical presuppositions of men like T. S. Eliot, John Crowe Ransom and Allen Tate, to whom Mr. Brooks explicitly acknowledges his indebtedness. If we dispense, for the purpose of this paper, with a detailed examination of these assumptions, we do so not because such an examination would

³ "The New Critics," in *Critiques and Essays in Criticism 1920-1948*, ed. Robert Wooster Stallman (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1949), p. 496.

⁴ Brooks, *Modern Poetry*, p. x.

⁵ Cleanth Brooks, *The Well Wrought Urn* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1947), p. xi.

be irrelevant—on the contrary, it would be very much to the point—but rather because our concern here is primarily with matters literary.. As Professor R. S. Crane has shown in his somewhat ill-natured onslaught on Brooks's position, the problems raised by Mr. Brooks's views may be considered, more or less satisfactorily, on the literary plane alone.⁶

Our emphasis on the essentially defensive qualities in Brooks's work may easily give rise to misunderstandings. Even a cursory glance at his writings, it might be contended, would make it apparent that, so far from being a defender, Mr. Brooks is constantly on the offensive, maligning the Romantics here and castigating the Neo-classicists there. Granted. Even so, his point of departure, I suspect, is always the desire to protect modern poetry. It is possibly significant that, in Mr. Brooks's own terms, "the thesis frankly maintained (in *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*) . . . is that we are witnessing ,or perhaps have just witnessed) a critical revolution of the order of the Romantic Revolt."⁷ By way of an explanation for his aggressiveness, we may be permitted the trite observation that an attack is the best form of defense. The point is perhaps not important. What does matter is that we form a clear idea of Brooks's demands on poetry and the grounds on which he posits his defense of the Donne tradition.

To write genuine poetry, Mr. T. S. Eliot tells us in his celebrated essay on "The Metaphysical Poets," "one must look into the cerebral cortex, the nervous system, and the digestive tracts."⁸ Mr. Brooks fully agrees, and accordingly chides the poets of the eighteenth and nineteenth century for concerning themselves, to use Eliot's terms, with "the cerebral cortex" to the neglect of "the nervous system, and the digestive tracts." He deplores Johnson's anxiety "to preserve a certain sublimity which he (Johnson) feels is injured by too much show of ingenuity or the use of undignified and prosaic diction"⁹ and regrets that Wordsworth's distinction between "fancy" and "imagination" led him to the conviction that "materials which are technical, sharply realistic, definite in their details are materials to be shunned in serious poetry."¹⁰ Both Johnson and Wordsworth—and they, of course, are representative of their age—Mr. Brooks finds, labor under the misapprehension that "some things are intrinsically poetic" and that "the intellectual faculty is somehow opposed to the emotional (the poetic)."¹¹ The metaphysical poets knew better—and so do the Moderns. There is, Mr. Brooks asserts, no such thing as an intrinsic poetic quality of the materials themselves. "Our only

⁶ R. S. Crane, "Cleanth Brooks; or, The Bankruptcy of Critical Monism," *Modern Philology*, XLV (1948), 226-245.

⁷ Brooks, *Modern Poetry*, pp. viii-ix.

⁸ Eliot, *Essays*, p. 250.

⁹ Brooks, *Modern Poetry*, p. 8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

test for the validity of any figure," he concludes, "must be an appeal to the whole context in which it occurs: Does it contribute to the total effect, or not?"¹² Most important of all, such figures are functional and cannot be detached from their context without destroying the entire poem. The Neo-classicists and the Romantics apparently failed to realize that "the comparison *is* the poem in a structural sense,"¹³ for, as W. H. Auden has it, "idea and image are one."¹⁴

Once agreed that there is no intrinsically poetic subject matter and that the intellectual and emotional faculties are not incompatible, we have no logical reason for excluding wit from poetry. Thus Mr. Brooks categorically rejects the time-worn contention that wit and what Matthew Arnold called "high seriousness" are antithetical. On the contrary, he finds that high seriousness may be achieved "not in spite of wit, but by means of wit."¹⁵ Ingenuity, even more than simplicity, might make for sincerity and tenderness. In fact, only by showing "a lively awareness of the fact that the obvious attitude toward a given situation is not the only possible attitude,"¹⁶ an awareness which finds its characteristic expression in the use of wit, will the poet do justice to the complexity of human experience. The fatal error of the Romantics lay in the assumption that they could achieve sincerity only by keeping out of the poem "all those extraneous and distracting elements which might seem to contradict what the poet wishes to communicate to his audience."¹⁷ The poet, however, must work by contradiction and qualification. Hence, Mr. Brooks places his stamp of approval upon what Mr. I. A. Richards has called "a poetry of synthesis." Such poetry does not leave out what is apparently hostile to its dominant tone,"¹⁸ but rather attempts the reconciliation of qualities which are opposite or discordant in the extreme."¹⁹ Since in life, as in art, all mature attitudes involve a mingling of the approbative and the satirical, the mature poet will freely avail himself of wit.

In the sense in which we have been using the term thus far, the word *wit* is, of course, a generic term, embracing such literary devices as puns, ambiguity, irony and paradox. If only because no words occur more frequently in Mr. Brooks's critical vocabulary than do the terms irony and paradox, it will be necessary, at this point, to attempt some

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹³ *Loc. cit.*

¹⁴ W. H. Auden, "Against Romanticism," *The New Republic*, CII (Feb., 1940), 187. (This is a review of Cleanth Brooks's *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*).

¹⁵ Brooks, *Modern Poetry*, p. 22.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹⁷ *Loc. cit.*

¹⁸ Cleanth Brooks, "Irony and 'Ironic Poetry'," *College English*, IX (1948), 234.

¹⁹ Brooks, *Modern Poetry*, p. 43.

sort of definition of them. We should have no difficulty in making a distinction, for a reference, in *The Well Wrought Urn*, to "the character of paradox with its twin concomitants of irony and wonder"²⁰ suggests clearly that paradox, as seen by Brooks, is to be classed as a more intense, a more concentrated form of irony. This appears to be the way in which Professor Crane interprets Brooks's terminology. After having traced back Brooks's concepts to early stages of logic and rhetoric, Crane remarks that, for Brooks, "'paradox' would seem to differ from 'irony' only as it signifies irony especially in its narrower sense...the special kind of qualification...which involves the resolution of opposites."²¹ If this be indeed the true relationship, paradox will have to be treated as a subdivision of irony. There is much, as a matter of fact, in Brooks's various attempts to characterize what he means by irony and ironic poetry to justify such a classification.

"Now the obvious warping or modification of a statement by the context we characterize as 'ironical,'" Mr. Brooks remarks in a recent article.²² Subsequently, he summarizes this statement once again by referring to irony as "an acknowledgment of the pressure of context."²³ In *The Well Wrought Urn*, finally, he defines "irony" as "the most general term that we have for the kind of qualification which the various elements in a context receive from a context."²⁴ Needless to say, as used here—a use, I believe, that goes back to I. A. Richards—the term has been completely divorced from its conventional rhetorical meaning. In its new denotation it serves Mr. Brooks handily. Above all, he uses it to distinguish the language of poetry from that of science. In mathematical formulæ, he maintains, the individual terms are not modified by context and thus afford a striking contrast to those of the poetic organism, where "any 'statement'...bears the pressure of the context and has its meaning modified by the context."²⁵ We shall not pause here to quarrel with Mr. Brooks's denial that contextual qualification occurs in science, though Professor Crane challenges even that assertion. We might note in passing, however, that the "contextual qualification" which Mr. Brooks seems to restrict to drama and poetry is surely to be found in most forms of discourse, prose or poetry. Edmund's "Ripeness is all," it is true, is meaningful only because it has the weight of the entire play behind it—but so, for that matter, is any sentence from a novel, if divorced from its context. Though useful, the term must be handled with extreme care—and one may wonder whether Mr. Brooks always exercises the necessary caution.

²⁰ Brooks, *Urn*, p. 16.

²¹ Crane, "Brooks," p. 235.

²² Brooks, "Irony," p. 232.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

²⁴ Brooks, *Urn*, p. 191.

²⁵ Brooks, "Irony," p. 233.

From the premise that the scientist's language is devoid of that kind of contextual qualification which is the peculiar function of irony, it follows logically that the language of science must be "purged of every trace of paradox."²⁶ Conversely, it is also true that the poet's language, relying heavily on precisely those contextual modifications which the scientist must shun, will find much of value in the use of paradox. "The method of art," Mr. Brooks believes emphatically, "can...never be direct—it is always indirect."²⁷ For purposes of achieving this indirectness the paradox is not only a useful, but even a natural device. Indeed, Mr. Brooks goes so far as to say that "the paradoxes spring from the very nature of the poet's language" and that "there is a sense in which paradox is the language appropriate and inevitable to poetry."²⁸ An analysis of Wordsworth's "Composed upon Westminster Bridge" serves as illustration of the fact that even so forthright a poet as Wordsworth is driven into the use of paradoxes. Nevertheless, many poets of the eighteenth and nineteenth century closed their eyes to this necessity. It is only the Moderns who have restored paradox, along with irony and other devices of wit, to the rightful place, from which it had been displaced nearly three hundred years ago. This is not to say, of course, that the poets between Donne and Yeats excluded wit altogether. *The Well Wrought Urn*, it will be remembered, was written to show the prevalence of irony and paradox in all periods of modern English literary history. Such wit as did occur, however, Mr. Brooks has us believe, occurred only as the result of an instinctive awareness, on the part of the poet's sensibility, of its values—and certainly in total disregard of pervasive critical beliefs.

Harmful as the assumption that wit is antithetical to high seriousness was, its destructive influence is overshadowed, in Brooks's eyes, by what, if possible, is an even more damaging heresy: that which conceives of poetry as a statement. To those who uphold this concept—and Mr. Brooks implies that most conventional critics do—"the poem is...essentially a variety of prose which conveys a kind of information or makes some kind of point."²⁹ As a result, they "tend to insist on clarity and power of conviction as its virtues and to reduce rhythm and metaphor to the status of ornament and illustration."³⁰ In reality, of course, the poem is a unified construct, from which, as we saw earlier, nothing may be detached without impairing the whole. As early as 1937, Mr. Brooks

²⁶ Brooks, *Urn*, p. 3.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁹ Cleanth Brooks, "The Poem as Organism," *English Institute Annual 1940* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), p. 21.

³⁰ *Loc. cit.*

was writing that "the poetic quality resides in a functional combination of factors rather than in the intrinsic nature of any single factor."³¹ In later articles and books he defines the precise nature of the factors which the poet, as a maker, must combine. The structure he requires is a sort of Hegelian dialectic which comes to him, I presume, via Coleridge's concept of the imagination—a concept which takes the imagination to be a power whose task is "the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities."³² In 1939 Brooks characterizes metaphysical poetry—with all the marks of approbation—as "a poetry in which the poet attempts the reconciliation of qualities which are opposite or discordant in the extreme."³³ But not only does the poet have to fuse heterogeneous *ideas* into an organically unified whole, he must also do justice to the "plasticity of *words* and the organic nature of their relationship."³⁴ We should not, Mr. Brooks warns us, "conceive of words . . . as sharply isolated entities, like beads on a string, each opaque and impervious to others. . . . Rather we have to think of them . . . as burrs—predisposed to hang together in any fashion whatsoever."³⁵ In a good poem, then, both incongruous ideas and plastic words are successfully joined in such a way as to yield an organically unified pattern. It is therefore idle to talk in terms of "content" or "subject matter," for "unless one asserts the primacy of the pattern, a poem becomes merely a bouquet of intrinsically beautiful items."³⁶ Content and form are indivisible. To attempt a separation of the two is to commit the heresy of paraphrase. Since the poem is an organic entity, the attempt to abstract a prose meaning from it is futile and even dangerous—dangerous, because it tends to "bring the statement to be conveyed into an unreal competition with science or philosophy or theology."³⁷ Mr. Brooks would have us think of a poem as a drama, regard it "as *an action* rather than as a formula for action or as a statement about action,"³⁸ and realize that, since in the theatre "the total effect proceeds from all the elements in the drama, . . . in a good poem, as in a good drama, there is no waste motion and there are no superfluous parts."³⁹ If we accept the analogy, we shall realize that the poet's task is radically different from that of

³¹ Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, "The Reading of Modern Poetry," *American Review*, VIII (1937), 439.

³² Brooks, *Modern Poetry*, p. 40.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

³⁴ Brooks, "Poem as Organism," p. 27.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

³⁶ Brooks, *Urn*, p. 178.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

³⁹ Brooks, "Irony," p. 232.

the scientist. Whereas the latter abstracts experience in order to analyze it, the former returns "to us the unity of the experience itself as man knows it in his own experience."⁴⁰ But a successful poem is more than a simulacrum of reality: its unity lies in what Mr. Brooks calls "the unification of attitudes into a hierarchy subordinated to a total and governing attitude."⁴¹ If this be true, the question of poetic belief need never arise. "A poem," asserts Mr. Brooks, "does not *state* ideas but rather *tests* ideas."⁴² So long as it does justice to the complexity of human experience by unifying apparently contradictory and conflicting elements into a new pattern, which, in turn, will stand up under "ironical contemplation," we shall not challenge the scientific truth of the doctrine enunciated. If we do, "either through the poet's fault or our own, we have," as I. A. Richards puts it, "for the moment ceased to be readers and have become astronomers, theologians, or moralists . . ."⁴³ "A poem," Mr. Brooks observes in disposing of the problem of poetic belief, "is to be judged, not by the truth or falsity as such, of the idea which it incorporates, but rather by its character as drama—by its coherence, sensitivity, depth, richness, and tough-mindedness."⁴⁴

Before taking up the discussion of the corollaries of Mr. Brooks's position, it might be well to sum up our findings. Mr. Brooks, we have learned, accepts the doctrine that the poet thinks through his emotions. He therefore considers the emotional and intellectual as by no means incompatible and, furthermore, rejects the assumption that there are inherently poetic materials. The good poem, as he conceives of it, amalgamates, by the use of irony and paradox, a series of disparate and seemingly incongruous experiences into an organic and non-paraphrasable whole. Possessing imaginative rather than logical unity, this organic construct will prove invulnerable to ironical contemplation and, by its complexity, will faithfully mirror the complexity of human experience.

A concept of poetry such as that held by Mr. Brooks will lead naturally, almost inevitably, to, at least, two inferences which we shall now have to examine. If, for one thing, the poem be indeed a unified and organic pattern wrenched out of the recalcitrant materials of human experience, it will have become autonomous and endowed with a life of its own. It follows from this that the criteria for judging what the poem says must inhere in the poem itself rather than in an extraneous frame of reference. The point needs elaborating, for no other doctrine

⁴⁰ Brooks, *Urn*, p. 194.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 229.

⁴³ Brooks, *Modern Poetry*, p. 49.

⁴⁴ Brooks, *Urn*, p. 229.

in Mr. Brooks's poetical theory has been more controversial. Though his *explications de texte* show evidence of a constant use of the fruits of historical scholarship—the common complaint runs—Mr. Brooks, by concentrating on the poem as poem, tends to belittle the work of the historical scholar. As a matter of fact, Mr. Brooks is at some pains to acknowledge his obligations to scholars of other disciplines. "The critic," he remarks (somewhat grudgingly, to be sure) in an article on Marvell's "Horatian Ode," "obviously must know what the words of the poem mean, something which immediately puts him in debt to the linguist; and since many of the words in this poem are proper nouns, in debt to the historian as well."⁴⁵ What he does denounce is the widespread scholarly practice of drawing conclusions about the meaning of a work of art either from other writings by the same author or from biographical data. He cites as a horrible example a book by Mr. Maurice Kelley on Milton, in which Kelley seeks to establish the meaning of *Paradise Lost* by an examination of the ideas enunciated in *The Christian Doctrine*. Such a procedure, Mr. Brooks points out, rests upon "the dangerous assumption that Milton was able to say in *Paradise Lost* exactly what he intended to say; and that what he supposed he had put into the poem is actually to be found there."⁴⁶ The refractoriness of language alone compels the poet into expressing things at variance with those he purposes to say. Historical and biographical information is helpful, to be sure, and Mr. Brooks readily admits this, but, ultimately, we have to turn to the poem itself for an answer to our questions. "No amount of historical evidence as such," Mr. Brooks insists, "can finally determine what the poem says."⁴⁷ It may justly be objected, I think, that in the critic's equipment there must be more than a knowledge of what the words mean and of the historical significance of the proper nouns. He needs to know something of the conventional beliefs of the age in which the poem was produced, of the poet's pet theories as expressed in his correspondence, and so forth.⁴⁸ I am not sure that Mr. Brooks makes sufficient allowance for all this. Certainly, in his textbook explications

⁴⁵ Cleanth Brooks, "Criticism and Literary History: Marvell's Horatian Ode," *Sewanee Review*, LV (1947), 204.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

⁴⁸ See, in this connection, Arthur Mizener's highly favorable review of *The Well Wrought Urn*. His sympathy with Brooks's methods does not stop him from protesting vigorously against Brooks's rejection of historicism. "It would be foolish of us," Mizener insists, "thus severely to deprive ourselves of such advantages as may be gained by noticing, for instance, the recurrence of similar attitudes from poem to poem of a single author, or the similarities between attitudes in his poems, his criticism, and his letters, or the relations between the attitudes in his poems and the attitudes asserted elsewhere in his time." ("The Desires of the Mind," *Sewanee Review*, LV (1947), 446).

he takes care to create an impression of having disregarded such matters completely. By his insistence, however, that more than anything else the poem itself will supply answers to our queries about its meaning, he says, I believe provided a wholesome antidote to the vagaries into which historical scholarship has so often led us.

The second inference to be drawn from Mr. Brooks's critical theory concerns the need for a revised history of English literature. If a poem is what Mr. Brooks says it is, the critical principles that have guided the conventional writers on English literary history must necessarily be reconsidered. A new history, Mr. Brooks suggests in the final chapter of *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*, would have to be written in terms of the eclipse and rebirth of the type of poetry which is most commonly associated with the metaphysical school. By their use of wit the poets of the Donne circle had achieved that complete fusion of the intellect and the emotion which, to Mr. Brooks, is the *sine qua non* of all great poetry. With the Neo-classicists, the scope of wit has become narrowed. The satiric impulse was segregated from other impulses and, as a result, tragedy became too noble and too easily didactic. Specifically, Mr. Brooks ascribes the breakdown of Elizabethan tragedy to the same cause that spelled the ruin of metaphysical poetry: that is, the tendency toward order and simplification which was introduced as a concomitant of the scientific spirit. Like a good poem, a tragedy, as defined by Mr. Brooks, assimilates incongruities and yields no positive answers. Naturally then it would prove wholly unsatisfactory to the scientific mind, with Hobbes, accordingly, "the incongruous has been toned down—and the tragic tension relaxed,"⁴⁹ so that ultimately "with the Restoration, sensitiveness to complex unity . . . became coarsened, or overridden by the all too explicit theories of decorum and correctness."⁵⁰ Such theories led, moreover, to the use of poetic materials merely for purposes of decoration and added dignity. The distrust of the intellect and the belief that poetry inheres in certain materials, fostered by Dryden, Johnson and other critics of the Neo-classical period, became fatal to the poetry of the Romantics. With the exception of Keats and Coleridge, all Romantic poets may, as is Shelley, be charged with "sentimentality, lack of proportion, confusion of abstract generalization with symbol and confusion of propaganda with imaginative insight."⁵¹ By the time we reach Victorian poetry the dissociation of sensibility is complete. Not until late in the nineteenth century, with the emergence of a poet like Hardy, is there a revival of the structure of metaphysical poetry. Mr. Brooks, I imagine, would probably no longer defend the inflexible bed of Procrustes into which English literature is forced in this reading of its

⁴⁹ Brooks, *Modern Poetry*, p. 208.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

history. *The Well Wrought Urn*, at any rate, seems to indicate that he has found far more wit than he had anticipated in some of the poets he had previously spurned. At the same time, it would be an error to assume that there have been any essential modifications in his position. He has merely found in unexpected places examples of the literary techniques he prizes. So far as I can see, however, he has never substantially deviated from the views he first propounded in the early thirties.

Of Mr. Brooks's thoroughgoing absolutism, it must be abundantly clear by now, there can be no possible doubt.⁵² Underlying his entire theory there is the firm conviction that normative judgments about poetry are not only desirable, but even essential—essential, that is, if we wish to preserve the concept of poetry at all. Characteristic of our time, thinks Mr. Brooks, is a relativistic tendency to blur distinctions between poetry and scientific prose. This trend, he suggests, can be arrested only if we affirm the existence of absolute and permanently valid criteria for differentiating between poetry and scientific prose. Unless such standards are formulated, the very foundations upon which literary criticism rests will be destroyed. The matter is crucial, for not only poetry, but the Humanities in general are at stake. If the critic renounces the burden of making normative judgments and contents himself with relating works of art to their cultural matrix, he must expect to be treated as no more than a sociologist—and, as Mr. Brooks points out, not a very important kind of sociologist at that. Mr. Brooks, for one, has no hesitations about accepting the critic's burden and readily declares that, in *The Well Wrought Urn*, "the judgments are very frankly treated as if they were universal judgments."⁵³ The willingness with which he dispenses *ex cathedra* pronouncements on the *goodness* or *badness* of a poem is, as a matter of fact, one of the most striking traits of such textbooks as *Understanding Poetry*⁵⁴—and has naturally met with considerable opposition, originating from such widely differing camps as that of the Neo-Aristotelians and that of the Relativists.

We have already, from time to time, referred to Professor R. S. Crane's systematic assault on what he calls Brooks's monism. Arguing with considerable acuteness, Professor Crane accuses Brooks of having reduced Coleridge's "multidimensional and hence relatively sophisticated theory"⁵⁵ to a mere shadow of itself. Of a system that allows Coleridge

⁵² "Thoroughgoing," even though, in what was presumably a weak moment, he has gone on record with the admission that "no meaningful criterion of poetry can ultimately eliminate the subjective." (*Urn*, p. 230).

⁵³ Brooks, *Urn*, p. 199.

⁵⁴ Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, *Understanding Poetry* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1938), *passim*.

⁵⁵ Crane, "Brooks," p. 230.

"to discriminate aspects of poems as determined now by their medium or manner, now by their substance, now by their origin in the mental powers of the poet, now by their immediate and remote ends," ⁵⁶ Brooks, says Professor Crane, has retained only two points: "the proposition that the 'imagination' reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite and discordant qualities; and in the proposition that the proper antithesis to poetry is science." ⁵⁷ Whereas Coleridge was looking for structural distinctions between various types of poems as well as between poems and other forms of composition, Brooks is merely concerned with distinguishing poetry from science. Unlike Coleridge who required of the critic the use of at least three sciences — grammar, logic, and psychology — "Mr. Brooks finds it possible to get along with only one, namely, grammar; and with only one part of that, namely, its doctrine of qualification." ⁵⁸ The result of all this is that Mr. Brooks's critical apparatus provides us with no tools for discriminating "between poems so obviously different in the special kinds of pleasure they give as are the *Odyssey* and *The Waste Land*." ⁵⁹ Professor Crane concludes his rather devastating attack by pointing out the obvious fact, suggested earlier in this paper, that the type of textual qualification which Brooks calls "irony" may be discovered in Plato's *Republic* or Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* as well as in the poems analyzed in *The Well Wrought Urn*.

One may speculate what Mr. Brooks's rejoinder to Crane's attack might be. Conceivably he might deny ever having been presumptuous enough to formulate a poetic theory at all. Rather, he might urge, he was concerned with stressing, perhaps excessively, but certainly not unprofitably, an aspect of poetry which criticism had hitherto neglected. As corroborating evidence he might cite his extremely valuable textual exegeses, which Professor Crane somewhat cavalierly dismisses without so much as considering them. Clearly, however, the Achilles heel of this defense would be the assurance with which he disposes of poems deficient in irony and paradox. Only an all-embracing poetical theory, it might be countered, would entitle him to sit in judgment on the Romantics. Such a theory, however (as Professor Crane has shown) he lacks.

But even if, for the sake of the argument, we assume that Mr. Brooks has succeeded in formulating a valid poetical theory, we may yet find that he is unable to justify his absolutism. His inconclusive attempt to ward off the implicit assault on his position contained in Professor

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

Frederick A. Pottle's *The Idiom of Poetry* would suggest his inability to cope with Critical Relativism. Mr. Pottle raises a perplexing question. "Is it not simpler," he asks, "and a great deal more satisfactory to abandon as meaningless the search for an absolutely good style, and to agree that good taste in literature is, like good taste in language, the expression of the sensibility in accordance with the accepted usage of the time?"⁶⁰ The position implicit in this question leads Pottle — quite logically — to the conclusion "that all critical judgments are relative to the age producing them, since the measure or standard varies unpredictably from one age to another."⁶¹

It is fair to say, I think, that both Pottle and Brooks are at considerable pains to exclude metaphysical issues from their critical theories. However strenuous their attempts, it is now apparent that this cannot be done. At issue here, it seems to me, is the conceptual structure of the human mind. If the minds of all men of all ages have certain fundamental concepts in common, Mr. Brooks's attempt to set up permanent criteria for evaluating poetry is legitimate. If human minds do not share such universally held concepts, Mr. Pottle's objections to Mr. Brooks's procedure are well taken. Whether they like it or not, the question is a metaphysical one. Its pro's and con's do not concern us here. What does matter is that neither Pottle nor Brooks appears to be alive to the full implications of his stand. Clearly, Pottle gains nothing by attempting to buttress his position with analogies drawn from physics and linguistics. He merely beclouds an issue which, I suspect, must ultimately be settled on the plane of æsthetics, a field which modern critics are curiously anxious to avoid. And Mr. Brooks's "rebuttal," as might have been expected, is equally unsatisfactory. Pottle's position, he suggests, would "involve us in more complexities than would any doctrine of absolute criteria."⁶² If it can be disposed of at all, the relativistic position surely cannot be dismissed that easily. To point out that by granting each period its own standards of criticism we should saddle ourselves with innumerable subperiods on the sensibility of which we should find it difficult to agree is to demonstrate the problems into which Relativism will get us, it is true. It is not, however, to refute Relativism on any sound basis. This could be done only with a systematic æsthetic — something which, as he himself has publicly admitted, Mr. Brooks lacks.

Mr. Brooks, one fears, is vulnerable on several scores. If we are still disposed to consider him a major and thoroughly beneficial influence

⁶⁰ Frederick A. Pottle, *The Idiom of Poetry* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1941), p. 30.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁶² Brooks, *Urn*, p. 209.

on the contemporary critical scene, we are so because his brilliant textual exegeses have forced us into reading poems with unprecedented closeness. The only one of the New Critics to have made his immediate influence felt in the classroom, he has raised issues that had long needed airing and has thus rendered an invaluable service to our thinking on poetry.



BERG ON FLOE

(A malicious parody of Peter Viereck's most
pretentious and humourless verse-style.)

Is she the Nome and adverb of "to freeze"?

No Jason ever melts such Fleece.

No unicorn impales her unwed earth

Though seismographs record such birth.

An almost-Palestinian hush belies

The almost-island of such ice—

As if she prayed as Sinai's mountain did

And sprouted saints like other deserts do.

Or Gothic: like a God-raped caryatid

Tingling with terrors gargoyles never knew.

—Retep Kcereiv Setisreht

The Lady and the Snow

by

Joseph Patrick Roppolo

They came to New Orleans in 1895 because she wished it. They came, however, when *he* wished it. It had been her dream to spend Christmas in the South, to see palm trees and living green-and-red poinsettias instead of the swirling, dirty snow of Philadelphia; or failing that, she had dreamed of a Mardi Gras season, of a costume ball at the St. Charles, of champagne at Antoine's, champagne and music and food and . . . laughter. Yes, laughter. There had been little laughter since she married *him*.

He knew her dream, just as he knew that she hated Philadelphia and the snow. And he planned the journey to New Orleans with delicate care: they would arrive after Christmas, and they would leave before Mardi Gras. It was true that they would not escape all of the festivities, but that fact could be turned to his advantage among the neighborhood gossips. It was equally true that late January and early February usually brought New Orleans' coldest and wettest weather. He counted on that.

The gossips took their cue correctly. It was wonderful, they thought and said, how carefully he always planned things. The young couple—the beautiful young bride and the older but handsome bridegroom—would be home for Christmas, with their multitude of friends and relatives, and yet they could enjoy the winter season in New Orleans. Oh, she was a lucky girl, this bride.

And, somehow, in their blindness, the gossips forgot completely that it was she who had the money originally. And, perhaps because he was handsome, they never noticed the thin lips or the eyes that glinted like agates, hard, cold, soulless; nor did they ever become aware of the bride's quick disillusion, of her growing fear, of her sense of being imprisoned: all Philadelphia was a prison. It was worse; it was a death house. She had been sentenced to it for having money. A priest had pronounced the sentence and delivered her to her executioner, "to have and to hold, 'till death. . . ." They never knew, those gossips, how his fingers had squeezed her arm as he stood, glowing and triumphant, by her side at the wedding reception. There were bruises which she was careful to hide on the following day; but bruises on her arms came to be marks of possession, almost permanent marks which served to remind her that she and everything she had belonged to him and that

to gain his own ends, to further his own ambitions, he was capable even of murder.

She was afraid, but she could not escape the pleasurable excitement of a trip to New Orleans. They traveled luxuriously: by train to St. Louis, by steamer from St. Louis to New Orleans. He enjoyed traveling; he enjoyed talking to strangers, boasting a little, buying drinks to flaunt his wealth; and strangers liked him. That gave her a little peace. Sometimes she could even sleep — until he returned and shook her gently, asking, "Are you asleep, dear? Are you asleep?" until he was quite sure that she was not. The strangers, of course, remarked upon his solicitude; they guessed that the handsome Philadelphians were traveling for the lady's health.

At the St. Charles Hotel in New Orleans the young couple acquired a suite, but she was seldom out of it. Word spread quickly among his acquaintances that she was exhausted by the trip, that she was ill, that she could accept no invitations. He went about, smiling, buying cigars and drinks for an increasingly large throng, suggesting over and over again the fears he held that his bride was seriously ill, that Death, rather than Cupid, hovered over their wedding bed. He won the active sympathy of all the gentlemen hangers-on, and some of the ladies dared to smile at him from behind their fans.

There were, in the hotel, some who were not ladies, some who were, in fact, actresses, members of a repertoire group. They were bolder; they tried to add the wealthy visitor to their string of admirers, but he shied away. The gentlemen found that amusing: when he had been married longer, they said, he would come trotting to the stage door as quickly as any; but they said it gallantly: they hinted that when he switched his affections to actresses, they would transfer their adoration to his wife. And this was more than humor. The poor, sick lady was almost fabulously beautiful; she was pale, quiet, somehow mysterious, and forever unapproachable. They would have swarmed about her, these dashing gentlemen, but they were firmly discouraged by her watchful husband; she would not stand excitement, he said; so there were no parties. And only occasionally did they go out, once to see *Hamlet*, which she found depressing; more often for walks, on the dampest, coldest days of the month. And always he squired her carefully, protecting her from the annoyance of acquaintances, helping her carefully across the streets, talking animatedly. The ladies watched and envied her and wondered what he would do when she died. They never knew about the bruises on her arms; and although they commented on the frequency with which she returned from walks with her shoes and her skirts muddy and wet, it never occurred to them that it might be more than weakness or carelessness on her part.

He took her to strange places; they visited all the cemeteries, and he was careful to discuss the problems involved in above-the-ground

burial in New Orleans; he pointed out the bone heaps, all that remained of evicted tenants of honeycomb tombs; she saw the slave marts and the haunted houses — all the horrible and depressing things that she would have avoided had she been able. But she was learning. Occasionally she could see a play she particularly wanted to see or visit an old mansion that she longed to explore. It was only necessary to convince her husband that she actually felt too ill to go, that her head was splitting, that there were other things she preferred to do, that this was something that she particularly did not want to see, that the weather was much too bad, and they went. That was how she came to see Tante Marie.

Even in her secluded, almost isolated situation, she had heard of Tante Marie. A Negro voo-doo woman, a witch, a spiritualist, a dark priestess, a sort of minor goddess, they called her; but there was general agreement that, whatever she was, she would make your wishes come true; she had a way with the Fates or the Spirits or the Gods of the Jungle, they said; she would place your wish before them and tell you almost immediately if it had been granted, or if it would be. There was no appeal from her pronouncements; but one thing seemed certain: the wishes which she said had been granted by her gods invariably were fulfilled.

The young wife heard these whispers about Tante Marie and was fascinated, but she kept silent. One day *he* would mention the old priestess. . . . And one day he did.

"I don't want to see her," his wife said. "It's all superstition, black, ugly superstition. It's — it's wicked."

"You'll see her," he said, "tonight."

"There's a cold wind," she said, "and it's sure to rain. I won't go."

So she went. The blue fingermarks on her arms, the new fingermarks, did not show under the heavy cape she wore. Nor did the triumph show in her eyes.

Tante Marie was more than either of them expected. Obviously she was a fraud. She lived in an unpainted shack as unremarkable as ramshackle, as unattractive and as untidy as any of its neighbors along the Mississippi levee. It was, in fact, one of more than a score of identical shacks thrown up hastily by and for freed negroes at the end of the war. Its only distinguishing feature was a statue erected in her front yard, a poor copy, a parody of a plaster saint in one of the Catholic churches. He would have sneered at the idea of an adventure in such an ordinary place had he not felt her shudder. It might have been the cold, sharp wind, or the clouds that pressed low and heavy over the city, or it might have been fear, but she shivered, and, his fingers encircling her arm firmly, he guided her up the three steps (scrubbed with red brick dust to keep out evil) and into Tante Marie's "chapel."

The long room was empty and, in the dim and flickering candle-light, chaotic. It resembled a shrunken shrine that had been used for a shelter after a hurricane; it resembled a St. Joseph's altar after hungry beggars had eaten their fill; it resembled a church that had been turned into a cafeteria during a funeral. Food was all over the place — long loaves of bread and platters of fruit, spread over two long tables. Statues and statuettes, again crude copies of Roman Catholic figures, smiled and leered down at the tables. An altar, made of boxes, leaned against the far wall, supporting rather weakly two candelabra, on which eight candles were aflame. And everywhere, on the tables, on the altar, on benches, on chairs, were unlighted lamps...the wishing lamps.

There was no sign of Tante Marie, but in the space of seconds there was the sound of scampering feet, and two black boys, not over five, drew aside dingy curtains masking a door near the altar. The doorway yawned blackly, and then it was filled with Tante Marie, incredibly stout, incredibly old. She was cowled like a nun, but her robes were blue and white, and her hood and sash were scarlet. Her "rosary" was a chain of teeth, and dangling at one end, where on a true rosary the crucifix would hang, was a tiny skull, the skull, perhaps, of a rat or a monkey. Or a human. And Tante Marie rolled rather than walked. Her feet were invisible beneath the long robes, so that the illusion was perfect: like nothing alive, like a monstrous black doll, she rolled toward the Philadelphia couple.

Wide-eyed and silent, the young wife watched. She could not have spoken had she wanted to. She was trembling violently, and he knew it. When Tante Marie had entered the room, his fingers had slackened their hold on her arm; but they tightened again, now. It was as if, feeling her fear, he had regained his own composure. He stood slightly behind his wife, his right hand on her arm; his left hand began to jangle the loose change in his pocket. The noise was loud in the littered room.

Tante Marie stopped. She looked at her guests carefully. There was no trace of a welcoming smile. There was, instead, an air of hostility.

"Why have you come?" she said, and her voice was deep, her inflections, her pronunciations not Southern at all.

"Curiosity," he said, jangling the coins. "We have heard strange things, and we want to see them for ourselves."

"I...I wanted to make a wish," the young wife said.

"I am not a fraud," Tante Marie said, addressing herself to the husband, "nor am I in need of money."

They were fencing with invisible rapiers; they were battling like ancient enemies; she was reaching into his mind and answering thoughts

he had not spoken. Tante Marie knew his thoughts, "and she will know mine, too," the young wife told herself. "She will know mine, too." She would have gone then, turned and run, as if in confirmation of her fears, Tante Marie looked at her suddenly, and her husband laughed.

Tante Marie's eyes narrowed to slits.

"I do not like your laughter," she said to the man. "There was better laughter here before you came. There was good here. I fed one hundred and fifty of my people here tonight. There was good in this house until now. Please go."

But she did not turn away in complete dismissal. It was not over yet. She *knew*.

"We came to wish," the husband said.

"Tonight is the thirteenth of February," Tante Marie said. "Evil rides the wind and comes with the rain and the cold. It would be better if you had remained at home to make your wish. Please go. I do not like the smell of greed and hate."

It was a recitation, not speech at all. It was something she had read and remembered.

"I should like to make a wish," the bride said; and that, it seemed, was what Tante Marie was waiting for. She smiled a little.

"I do not like the smell of hate," Tante Marie said, "but perhaps the hate of evil is good. Come. We will see what the gods say."

The three moved further into the room, toward the long table.

"You will choose a lamp," Tante Marie said, "Then make your wish and, while I invoke the gods and the saints, light the lamp of your choice. If it burns blue, you shall have your wish. If it burns black, your wish will not be granted."

The bride chose a heavy lamp with a silver base.

"Must I speak my wish aloud?" she asked.

Tante Marie's eyes flicked toward the husband.

"You will not say your wish aloud now — or ever," she said.

Shadows crawled along the wall, and new ones sprang into being as the bride struck a lucifer and applied the flame to the wick of the lamp. The wick sputtered, and blue fire ran along its tip. The blue grew irregularly, reached its full height, and began a dance with yellow. A thin line of black smoke coiled upwards. Blue and yellow and black. . .

Husband and wife watched with fascination. Tante Marie sighed heavily and said, "Madam will get her wish — but only if her husband gets his."

After that Tante Marie could not or would not look at the bride's face. But she could not help hearing the husband's triumphant laugh.

"I'll light this one," he said.

More shadows joined the throngs on the wall and leaned in from the ceiling to watch.

The blue fire licked along the edge of the wick and spurted to full life.

"Blue," Tante Marie said. "Blue. You will get your wish. Both of you. But the lady will not speak hers."

"You will get your wishes," Tante Marie said again. Then she turned her back on them and rolled out of the room without another word.

"You forgot your money!" the husband shouted; but Tante Marie did not turn. He left several coins on the table; he left more than he had originally intended to pay, but he felt triumphant; he had scored a victory over his wife. His fingers on her arm were almost friendly.

"D'ye know what I wished?" he said. "D'ye know what I wished?" And when she did not answer he went on, gleefully: "I wished for snow, six inches of snow — more than six inches of snow — in New Orleans. Since you love snow, my dear, you shall have it. And if it does *not* snow, your poor wish..." He laughed and squeezed her arm. He was still laughing when they reached the St. Charles, and the ladies commented on his high good humor and envied the bride, who went, pale and silent, to her room.

It never occurred to her husband to ask her what she had wished instead, effervescing, he went down to the bar and told the story of his encounter with Tante Marie. In most of his details, he was accurate; but the story came out somehow as an account of an attack on superstition, with the forces of superstition, as represented by the bride and by Tante Marie, cleverly forced to the wall by the bridegroom.

The thirteenth of February was a merry evening in the St. Charles Bar. The men drank and laughed and talked about superstition and voodoo and vampires until the chiming of midnight silenced them. And then they laughed at their own fears, bred of bourbon and conversation, and began again.

At 1:38 a.m. on February 14, a traveling salesman opened the door to the barroom, took off his hat and shook it.

"Well, whaddayaknow!" he said. "It's snowing!"

There was dead silence.

The traveling salesman looked at the open mouths and the dropped jaws and was pleased.

"Well, it is," he said, and held out his hat for proof. Large flakes still clung to the damp felt.

What happened then the salesman described later simply as "a stampede."

"Everybody ran out, even the bartender," he said. "Man, they must like snow!"

There are tales that a group of gentlemen ripped through the Vieux Carré that night. They bought whiskey by the quart and drank in the streets. They tramped in the snow, they ate it; they sang Christmas songs and snow songs and even Yankee songs. And there is the story that one of the gentlemen stripped himself stark naked and shouted, "It's MY snow, boys! It's MINE! Enjoy it!" They say he took the pure white flakes up by the handful and washed himself with them...

It snowed all that night; and at dawn the bride stood looking from a window in the St. Charles Hotel. She was watching the heavy flakes fall on the grillwork of balconies, through the green of the palms and the potted plants. And there was an unholy light of pleasure in her eyes.

It was probably the first snowfall that the girl from Philadelphia had ever enjoyed.

Her husband came in at ten o'clock, clad only in shirt and trousers and wet through. He was roaring drunk.

"My gift to you," he shouted, and would have embraced her. "My Valentine for my lovin' wife." He rocked with laughter and collapsed across the bed.

She undressed him, rolled him into proper position, and covered him carefully. Then she sat by the window.

By noon he was feverish and coughing. By three o'clock in the afternoon, when six inches of snow lay on the streets of New Orleans and the snowfall had all but ceased, he was definitely ill, and she called the house physician.

"Pneumonia," the doctor said.

A supply of medicines was sent up and, at her request, a rocking chair.

She placed the chair near the bed and sat there, patiently. At six o'clock he opened his eyes and looked at her.

"It snowed," he said. "I got my wish."

She was silent.

"Now you'll get yours."

She looked at the snow on the roofs across the way and rocked.
She did not say a word.

"What did you wish?"

She did not answer.

"What did you wish?"

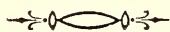
Silence.

He fell back on the bed. His sweat was more than the sweat of fever. He was afraid. He looked at his wife, at the slow curve of her neck, at the soft curls, at the firm chin, at her eyes, new eyes as empty and cold as glass, as soulless as his own.

"What did you wish?" he asked again, softly; but this time he did not expect an answer. He did not need one.

She sat by the bed and rocked.

In the lobby, when they discussed the rocker and the bride, they called it devotion.



LIGHT VERSE

I

A Robt. Burns? A Henry Clay?

"Alcestis rises from the shades,"
Said Landor, praising noble verse.
So these—and what a host they are! —
Some magic utterance persuades
To leave the leafy laureled hearse,
And stand—each re-arisen star—
Godfather to a mild cigar.

II

Rain Maker (Old Style)

"Dr. Ripley prayed for rain with great explicitness on Sunday, and on Monday the showers fell. When I spoke of the speed with which his prayers were answered, the good man looked modest."

—Emerson's journal, 1838.

Parson, appropriating God's
Share in the letting down of rain,
Nevertheless makes prayer a plea;
And rising from his bended knee,
Trusts the petition's not in vain:
Yet, in a wager, has been known
To claim the miracle his own
And give a doubting Thomas odds.

III

The Egg and I

The Child I used to be looks out
From the grave eyes of seven;
And what he sees in me, no doubt,
Makes two aversions even.

Long years lie blissfully between
The Sinner and the Little Shaver;
And conscious of what might have been,
Each eyes the other with disfavour.

Yes, you have reason, little lad,
To loathe your elder as you do;
But think what beastly luck I had
In being born a brat like you.

IV

Conversation Piece

Mr. Grim met Mr. Glum,
And the latter said, How come?
Said the former unto him,
You are Grum and I am Grim,
And the reason why is dim,
Though perhaps not so to some,
Silent in this interim
Into which ourselves are come.
Thank you, yes, said Mr. Glum,
Thank you kindly, Mr. Grim.

V

The Opportunist

They marvel how your hand shot out
To seize that famous lock of hair;
Forestalling *her* from going where
Some other might have done the same.
There's something to be said, no doubt,
For their adoption of that view;
Because it's certain that she came,
And also that she came to you.
But I suspect—suspicion grows,
As I that ribald scene restore—
That you were just the simp she chose
To dangle that gold forelock for.

VI

Brief Candles

1

The pictures in the Art Museum
Are all kept safe from those who see 'em;
They can't be reached to maul or muss;
Nobody cares what they do to us.

2

Here lies a novelist composed,
Indeed, we might believe, composing
Another work of fiction, prosed
In his inveterate way of prosing.

3

This is a work of pure deceit!
Which is the man, were hard to tell;
You must have sat at the sitter's feet,
To learn to lie so well.

4

Oh this Lady's grave plant hyssop,
And other pungent herbs thereon.
Who'll be filthied by your gossip,
Ladies, now she's gone?

5

Here, gathering dust, where living airs,
Year after year, are never blown,
Molder those happy toils of theirs.
And may that dust be not their own?

6

After I have been so bored
That I cry aloud, O Lord!
For a busy intermission
I'm believed to have ambition.

—Richard Kirk

TWO POEMS

I

The Season Of Rain

The season of rain is a season of resisting
a calla lily blows by my window

My heart is as wounded as the warrior dying
the field is charred to cinder

The aspersion that rankles is deep and dry
a well as hollow as myth

The horns of the dilemma are sharper than pain
I curse my hour of birth

As old as the reason my fall is ruin
the season of resisting is rain

II

Slow Cranes On Bold Wings

No fiercer pain is bestowed on denial
than the whisper of love at the farthest nerve

Vines are less tortured by the grapes gone sweet
than the anchorite emboldened by earnest dread

No wine is so sterile that the winter is wasted
no crevice of longing is spawnless of spore

The winter that strikes the blossomest season
is the one most dreaded for wanton destruction

The bird that pecks dung on the cobblestone street
is stronger of feather than the loverless night

No stream is so salty from junction to source
that the pussy willows shun the rim of its bank

The bunk of the saint may be coarsened with straw
but the limpingest passion will warm it to down

no night past the fealing feathered in flesh

—J. C. Crews

THREE POEMS

I

Lost Proclivity

The year had sunk to its hollow season
as had the seasons of man

And only fact lifted to the pinnacle
beneath the green eyed Nemesis
as they chanted, chanted
up the sallow land

Man sunk to his hollow season
wound the skein of the years
bound his eye on the eye of Nemesis
naming her sweet goddess
because she resided in fact
because she was the skein of the years

Thus bound he himself
to the hollowness of seasons
shrunk in the towering chill

The air is green as the eye of Nemesis
and the odour is fetid, fetid
the air is green and dead

The air is dead but real

II

The Self Beneath The Stone

The symbol who is a sword

I too am symbol
I too am metaphysical sword

I symbol oblivion
the sword cuts
the teeth of the will

The teeth of desire
snarl
against the will

Am I symbol
will
desire?

I am a metaphysical sword
cutting all light
from all darkness

Such a great darkness

Where find a will
great enough to hold it?

Where find desire
small enough to abide in it?

III

Loather

Think not of the half-shut eye
as the eye of half vision
nor mocking conceit. The derision
will cut the cry
from the throat
just as the less obvious steel
would slit the heart. Gloat
in your own depths if you feel
gloating there.
Tempt the tacit beware.

—Mason Jordan Mason.



End of a Day

The sunken eyes of Time blink
As a last red spark flashes upward
From the anvil of Day.
Shades of the Dawn to Dusk dead,
Scale the spice-coloured horizon
Bearing blooming stalks of tuberoses.

The archer of Night pulls at his bow
Releasing the Evening Star.

—Rosa Zagnoni Marinoni

TWO POEMS

I

Comparing Rock To Stone

And only the brave shall know
how green few virgin pastures grow
in Elysian fields where dwell
the simpler aliens from Hell.

And only the brave shall find
what virginal patches of mind
may mirror the echoed groan
man sends comparing rock to stone.

II

Keyboard

What piano keys you become,
desires: what lovely concerto
soft fingers pick in spring
to make eyes dampen with tears
of memories and sympathy: love
is your major, playing ripplingly
of moonlight and autumn flowers;
time sheds no dangerous dust to fill
your motion-loved cracks, monotony
need never damn your pattern:

I would rather hear a lullaby
at dawn and a waltz for no more
slumber — for you are piano
keys, strange nidus of awesome
pounding music: deadly and beautiful.

—Lee Richard Hayman

THE DEAD FIELDS

. . . *Sic denique in aevum*
Ibit cunctarum series justissima rerum;
Donec flamma orbem populabitur ultima, late.
Circumplexa polos et vasti culmina coeli,
Ingentique rogo flagrabit machina Mundi.
Naturam Non Patri Senium, John Milton

I

These perhaps will be the dead fields.
Here perhaps the crops will never grow again
and tall marching ranks of corn will shake
their plumed heads no more.

The dead fields.

Here the furrowed land, the rich and loamy soil,
will turn into a desert.
This will be the desert land, the deserted land.
Once again the locusts and the weevils will emerge
a little better off than the men who exterminated them.

The deserted land.

Here the rivers will give up their waters—
ours the place of dry creekbeds and dusty bayous;
from the leveled mountains may be glimpsed
our rusty girder cities;

what we know as Truth
will have long since been buried
beneath countless tons of rubble.
And God will shake His head and sigh,
wondering if it would be worth the trouble
to start the thing over.

Place of dry rivers.

This will be perhaps the treeless place—
devoid of shade until the sun tires of shining
for no reason and burns out for good.
No one to ask himself how or why,
no one to care—
only the lifeless life which survives,
feeding on the earth itself.
(It will not be the only thing
which eats away the earth)
No one left to irrigate.

No water anyway.

The dead land.

Perhaps the winds will have died by then:
no cool breezes, no hot breezes, no salt breezes,
not even a dusty breeze—

only empty stillness.

On the other hand some good might come of it:
there would be no wars — no one to fight them;
no Georgia chaingangs — only broken bones
and rusty links.

Lack of food but no starvation.

The hungry mouths, only bombcraters,
filled with dust and silt.

Cure for all the world's ills.

The dusty land.

II

The magnolias are blooming now
and the clematis are shedding,
gently and silently falling to the ground.
The spiræa waves its filigree icicles
and wind swirls its petals to the grass
like a perfumed snowstorm.

The sweet land.

The greenblue bayou washes softly
against a mosscovered cypress stump
and laps at the foot of a tall liveoak.
A white heron shifts to its *left* foot
and the twilight turns the bayou *red*.
The shantyboat dweller puts down his knife
and picks up a sickle and hammer.
Hammer and sickle.

These could be the dried

the deserted

the dead fields.

—Albert Paris Leary

The Sophoclean Theme in Hardy the Novelist and Hardy the Poet

by

Julia B. Meyer

The reader of Thomas Hardy's works is immediately impressed with his definite skill in the sharp and incisive drawing of character and his ability to portray the life of his day. This, however, is a competence of technique which can have true literary value only when employed as the art with which a basic philosophy of the author is advanced. It is in the examination of Hardy's philosophy of life that one is startled by the possibility that despite the gap of some twenty-three centuries, Hardy might well have sat at the feet of Sophocles, as his disciple. For the philosophy of Hardy is completely parallel to that of Sophocles. Yet Hardy shows sufficient independence in his works to negate the thought that he embraced Sophocles to the exclusion of his own concepts; the conclusion is rather that he accepted Sophocles as one who concurred with him.

There is also a striking parallel between the life of Sophocles and that of Hardy,—both wrote some of the greatest pieces of creative literature at an age when most men have ceased to produce. Sophocles was awarded the prize at the Dionysia for his "Oedipus at Colonus" at the age of eighty, while Thomas Hardy completed his great epic drama, "The Dynasts" at the age of sixty-eight, and continued to write good poetry until his death in his eighty-eighth year.

Analyze one of Hardy's celebrated novels, "The Mayor of Casterbridge." Michael Henchard, the protagonist of this tale, assumes the role of a modern Oedipus; Henchard has committed a crime, thrives temporarily until his crime is discovered. He expiates his crime by being reduced to a lowly position, but through intense suffering attains a tragic nobility with ultimate purification in death. This same pattern may be traced in Sophocles' account of Oedipus in his "Oedipus Rex" and "Oedipus at Colonus."

In the details of both stories Hardy and Sophocles have plainly revealed their philosophy of the indifference of a Creator to the individual suffering of mankind, a tendency towards a mechanistic interpretation of the universe, which places the utmost emphasis on fate; yet they both imply that in some degree a man's character determines his fate.

Henchard had offended the moral law by his act of selling his wife, Susan, to a sailor, a deed which was the result of the combination of intemperance and a hot-headed, surly temper. This evil act shaped the

course of Henchard's life, although fate seemed to play a major role in the course of events, and the novelist does imply that man still retains some freedom of will, a choice between good and evil.

A quotation from Hardy himself, as he discoursed on this subject, may help to clarify this issue—"This theory, too, seems to me to settle the question of Free-Will versus Necessity. The will of man is, according to it, neither wholly free or wholly unfree. When swayed by the Universal Will (which he mostly must be as a subservient part of it) he is not individually free; but whenever it happens that all the rest of the Great Will is in equilibrium the minute portion called one person's will is free."

Oedipus' sin grew out of his overweening pride, when, he, a king's son, was rudely accosted on a highway by servants! Angered, Oedipus slew the servants and the old man, attended by them, who unbeknown to him, was his father, Laius, King of Thebes! Thus did Oedipus fulfill one part of the oracle, which had declared at his birth that he was destined to kill his father and wed his mother. Sophocles has thus disclosed his belief that a man's character directs his Destiny.

Sophocles and Hardy have emphasized repeatedly that fate is supreme, man but the plaything of the gods, and yet both urged the Hellenic concept of moderation and restraint and saw the great wisdom of submitting human life to the restrictions laid upon it by the structure of the natural order of which it is a part.

Both of these writers teach a catharsis of the spirit, a purging of impure emotions through suffering, and that pain must be borne bravely and with humility, if one is to attain ultimate purification. This is evident in Henchard, who does not try to evade responsibility when his crime is disclosed, as well as in Oedipus, who does not plead his ignorance as an excuse, but accepts full responsibility for what he has done.

That Thomas Hardy had this in mind when writing his novels of Wessex is best proved by his own words, "I wished to show that in out-of-the-way places dramas of a grandeur and unity truly Sophoclean are enacted in the real, by virtue of the concentrated passions and closely-knit interdependence of the lives therein."

And how does Hardy treat this same theme in "The Dynasts," his epic drama of the Napoleonic Wars, which covers the momentous decade of 1805-1815? In order to present his philosophy Hardy has created a new type of Greek chorus, a group of supernatural figures, phantom intelligences, who take no part in the course of events, but observe all the action and comment thereon. It is the Spirit of the Years, representing the stoically-minded, modern type of intellect, The Spirit of Irony, bitterly commenting on affairs, and The Spirit of the Pities, impotently sensing the injustices of suffering mankind, all of whom are allied with "It" or Imminent Will, a force which is unaware of the universe which It propels. Through the eyes of the Phantoms, Hardy

discloses his adherence to the principles of Darwin, Huxley, Spencer, Hume and Nietzsche. Acceptance of their teachings, Hardy felt, must necessarily displace God in the universe. However, Hardy held out the hope that "It", the mechanistic force or urge, was gradually becoming conscious of the cosmos, as he expressed it in his closing lines of "The Dynasts"—

"Consciousness the Will informing — till It fashion all things fair!"

Within the framework of these Phantoms, Napoleon is Henchard or Oedipus, the man of destiny, who thrives and waxes great, but is crushed in ultimate defeat. Hardy makes clear the spiritual dissolution of Bonaparte; at first, a man, who accepts with humble gratitude those attainments to which his star has lead him, but as time passes, and victory follows victory, he is poisoned by pride and becomes gross and less perceptive.

The figure of Napoleon calls to mind also Sophocles' account of Ajax, the great hero of the Trojan War, whose pride leads him to demand the arms of the fallen Achilles. Ajax, like Napoleon, becomes so imbued with pride that his mind has become dull. In the contest for the arms of Achilles, Odysseus, his opponent, is reported by Ovid to say to him:—

"Tu gerus vires sine mente: cura futuri est mihi"—thou hast strength without brain: the care of the future is mine—and Odysseus continues:

"Tu prodes tantum corpore: nos animo"—thou availest only in body: I in mind.

When the award of the arms is given to Odysseus, Ajax thinking his honor has been stained, sets out at night to murder Agamemnon, Menelaus, and Odysseus, who, he felt, were responsible for his ill treatment. Athena, angered because Ajax had previously exhibited excessive pride and was now planning deeds of violence, sent madness upon him. "Quos deus vult perdere prius dementat" or as Sophocles stated, "When Divine power plans evils for a man, it first injures his mind."

In "The Dynasts" Hardy depicts Napoleon as he prepares for the invasion of Russia; his horse stumbles, throwing him to the ground. The Voice of the Spirit of the Years tells him:

"The portent is an ill one, Emperor,
An ancient Roman would retire thereat!"

To which Napoleon cries:—

"Whoso spake, such portents I defie!"

Have not the gods, in truth, visited a form of madness upon the Emperor; has he not lost his acuity of vision which formerly guided him to paths of victory? But is not this, also, in part, self-inflicted? Is not this again the tragic theme of Sophocles' heroes, the single flaw, the crack, which corrupts or destroys its possessor?

"The Dynasts", with its vast panoramic view, is crammed with many memorable scenes,—the death of Nelson at Trafalgar, Napoleon's announcement of the pending divorce to Josephine, the burning of Moscow, the dramatic figure of Wellington in command at Waterloo, the emblem of English resistance to Napoleon's selfish ambition, all of which contribute to the essential theme of Hardy's philosophy. There is effective use of dramatic irony in Napoleon's bitter words, as he stands in the burning Kremlin, after the fierce struggle he had waged to win Moscow:—

"Moscow was meant to be my rest,
My refuge,—and it vanishes away!"

Sophocles' use of dramatic irony comes to mind in the figure of Oedipus, standing before the steps of the palace at Thebes, vowing to seek out and punish the tainted one who is responsible for the plague which is visiting Thebes, while all the while, he himself is the guilty one!

The necessity that the innocent must suffer along with the guilty is poignantly portrayed in the scene of the despairing French soldiers, later found frozen by the fireside on the wild steppes of Russia. Another instance of this same idea is found in Sophocles' portrayal of the faithful Antigone, who accompanies her aged father, Oedipus, to Colonos and suffers from the ensuing tragic events.

The life of Antigone, tragic and brief, recalls another of Hardy's great heroines, Tess, in his "Tess of the D'Urbervilles." Both are innocent women, driven by relentless fate to ultimate catastrophe, because they elect to obey a higher law than that of man. Tess is inherently honest and pure, and these qualities compel her to make her confession concerning her past to her lover, Angel Claire. She could have remained silent, as her mother had urged, and thereby saved herself from catastrophe, but by so doing she would have lost her soul. Antigone, also, was not discovered the first time she performed the sacred burial rites for her brother, and had she obeyed Creon's edicts, she would have saved her life. Antigone, however, felt compelled to obey the law of heaven and reburied the body of Polyneices. When confronted by the tyrant, Creon, Antigone said:—

"Nor did I deem thine edicts of such force
That they, a mortal's bidding, should o'erride
Unwritten laws, eternal in the heaven."

Angel Claire, as well as Creon, discover that pride, despotism and stubbornness must be punished, that man must preserve his spiritual humility and conform to the laws which are sovereign in the universe.

When reading the shorter poems and lyrics of Hardy's "Wessex Poems", a theme frequently encountered is the transiency of love. In "Neutral Tones" the poet describes unhappiness in love, the fact that

love deceives, "the grin of bitterness" on his once beloved's face, as he stands by a pond, edged with grayish leaves, on a winter day.

"Her Initials" reiterates the theme that love passes, that the radiance which once emanated from his beloved, no longer glows.

"Revulsion" expresses the fervent wish that he may live without a woman's love, as he is cognizant of the keen pain which accompanies loss of love, and he never wishes to experience that pain again!

Sophocles treats of this theme, the impermanence of love in "The Tracriniae." Deianeira, wife of Hercules, laments the loss of his love, but wisely acknowledges and submits to the instability of love. She says of herself, "Nor hath she yet to learn that the human heart is inconstant to its joys." In a fragment from "Unknown Dramas" Sophocles penned, "A woman's vows I write upon the wave."

In "Poems of the Past and Present" and "Time's Laughingstocks" Hardy describes the turmoil of the soul, the bitter struggle for existence in nature, the sorrow and suffering of man, the idea "that happiness is but an interlude in this vale of tears." This echos the closing lines of "Oedipus Rex":—

"Of no mortal say,
That man is happy till
Vexed by no grievous ill
He pass Life's goal."

Summing up, one finds in Thomas Hardy's poetry and prose as in the dramas of Sophocles, these timeless precepts—we are seemingly the playthings of the gods, but in reality each man's fate is conditioned by the irreparable character of human acts; man must submit to universal law and accept with resignation the divine orderings of his existence; man is culpable for the sins of pride, despotism and stubbornness; sin must be acknowledged, as man has a moral responsibility. It is from an understanding of these principles that man derives wisdom and, perhaps, his "interlude of happiness."

The essence of Hardy's concurrence with Sophoclean principles is best expressed by the Spirit of the Pities in Book I of "The Dynasts":—

" . . . A life there was
Among these self-same frail ones—Sophocles—
Who visioned it too clearly, even the while
He dubbed the Will 'the gods'. Truly said he
'Such gross injustice to their own creation
Burdens the time with mournfulness for us,

And for themselves with shame.—Things mechanised
By coils and pivots set to foreframed codes
Would, in a thorough-sphered melodic rule,
And government of sweet consistency,
Be cessed no pain, whose burnings would abide
With That Which holds responsibility,
Or inexist."*



THE DREAM

O fervent summer pulse of love,
 I felt you beating in my sleep;
I felt you beating through the world
 And my heart beating with your beat!

There was a wind of rushing air,
 There was a stream of sweetest dew,
There was a beam of arrowy light;
 With radiance I was stricken through.

As if in my own breast you breathed,
 As if your blood in my blood flowed;
We lay enarmed in that warm river,
 In the slumber that tide we rode.

The banks fell back each side our shoulders,
 Slowly went by us town and wood;
Like oldest memories the trees waited,
 The houses watched us where they stood.

With eyes half closed we lay and listened,
 We lay and drifted as the waters wound;
Echoing with love as a shell's hollow
 Echoes the surf and the wind's sound.

—Helen Hoyt

The Social and Economic Background of the *Comedia Figuron*

by

Ralph E. White

The Spanish drama of the seventeenth century is, perhaps, more nearly a reflection of contemporary society than that of any other age or people. In fact Lope de Vega called the *comedia* "un espejo de la vida." It was the extravagant and somewhat fantastic extremes of this complex society that furnished the materials that could best be handled in the drama, and especially in the *comedia de figurón*, which was essentially a social satire. Thus the *figuronista* had only to make use of the types around him. Because of this intimate relationship between the *comedia de figurón* and Spanish society an understanding of the latter is essential to a complete treatment of the former.

Madrid, the centre of literary as well as political and social life, was the most brilliant capital in Europe. It was, as yet, undimmed by the decline of Spanish military and political supremacy in the world, which was greatly aided by the ineptitude of the monarchs Philip III and Philip IV. The capital was the focal point of all national life. It had drawn unto itself the bulk of the remaining wealth and so became the mecca for everyone with genius or ambition, as well as pretenders seeking royal favour. At times the floating population was almost equal to the number of permanent residents.

Philip IV, who ruled from 1621 to 1665, was a zealous patron of arts and literature, and his reign was the most brilliant period of the theatre. But he was a slave to pleasure, giving over the reins of government to his favourites. He had a number of natural sons, some of whom became leaders in the Church and the army. The most famous of these was Don Juan of Austria, a name borne also by a similar offspring of his great-grandfather, Charles V. He was the son of a famous actress, María Calderón.

The court, following the king's example, became frivolous and pleasure-seeking. Pomp and show were the order of the day, and most of the people lived beyond their means. Political and economic decadence, set in motion during the last years of the reign of Philip II, gained momentum under his successors. According to Hume:

While the sovereign Philip III was blind and deaf to all but his frivolities and the superstitious awe that constituted his religion, Spain grew yearly poorer and more miserable as a nation, and the favoured classes, the nobles and the

clergy, practically exempt from taxation, waxed fatter and more lavish.

Soon after the accession of Philip IV to the throne the distress of the people was so great that the lands were being abandoned and the tenants were wandering on the roads, living on whatever could be obtained, or moving to provinces where the taxes were lower. The public treasury was so exhausted that all revenues were anticipated for years in advance and the royal patrimony greatly reduced. The currency had been raised to three times its normal value. Idlers crowded the monasteries, and hosts of students and beggars depended for daily subsistence upon the garlic soup and crusts which were doled out at the gates of the monasteries from the abundance of the friars.

In 1618 a commission was appointed to propose a remedy for the ruinous condition of the kingdom, began its memorial to the king as follows:

The depopulation and want of the people of Spain are at present much greater than ever before in the reign of your majesty's progenitors; it being in truth so great at this time that if God does not provide a remedy such as we may expect from your majesty's piety and wisdom, the crown of Spain is hastening toward total ruin; nothing being more evident than that Spain is on its way to destruction.

The importation of gold and silver from the American colonies, according to N. J. Hamilton, developed a false feeling of wealth and an irresistible desire to buy in foreign markets expensive goods which were not permitted to be made at home. The king and his ministers held to the belief, prevalent at the time, that financial strength rested in the possession of precious metals. Exportation of gold and silver was prohibited except in payment for wars. Thus the nation was robbed of all return in usable goods, the value of money went down, and the result was financial and economic ruin.

Excessive expenditures on dress and other luxuries became a matter of grave concern, and in spite of royal decrees forbidding the wearing of silks, brocades and gold and silver ornaments, these articles were purchased and used in both feminine and masculine attire. Fashions changed frequently and money had to be spent many times over. Severe penalties were assessed against violators of decrees to curb extravagance. *Alguaciles* were provided with shears, and at a given signal, raided the fashionable promenades, cutting the fine lace ruffs which dandies wore, and even snipping off the curls, called *guedajas*, which were the mark of the *lindo*.

The following is a pragmatic of Philip IV dealing with the hair-dress of men:

Se prohíbe a los hombres llevar en el pelo aquel adorno, ni guedejas con crespo o rizo en el pelo que no habría de pasar de la oreja, desponiendo que a los contraventeros no les recibiera el rey a su real presencia, ni a las audiencias para oír pretensiones, imponiéndose pena a los barberos que peinasen de aquel modo.

The homes of the nobility were elaborately furnished. Persian and Turkish carpets and hangings were quite common. Very lavish entertainments were given both in the palaces and the homes. In *Guzmán de Alfarache* there is a description of a state dinner at which twenty varieties of meat and fowl were served. The historian Ballesteros describes a Christmas dinner of thirty-six courses. The menu included: "ollas podridas, pavos asados, pichones y torreznos asados, perdices, salchichas, lechones asados, con sopa de queso."

At home the men were accustomed to sit at the table, while the women sat on cushions on the floor and ate from a cloth spread between them. In the living room the ladies sat on a platform which was separated by a railing from the part occupied by the gentlemen.

Besides the bullfight, the amusement of the men consisted in card-playing, both at home and in the cafés. Both sexes took part in *academias*, where each guest read a sonnet or other original composition. Sometimes these would propound riddles, as the one depicted in Moreto's play *No puede ser*. In this instance "what could not be" was to guard a woman's honour unless she herself so desired. Lope de Vega, in *Le mozade cántaro*, presents another good example of this custom. One of the first of these literary clubs was formed in Seville at the home of Hernán Cortés. Lope de Vega was a member of one called "Madrid" and it was to this group that he presented his now famous *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en España*.

On one occasion some of the leading literary figures, assembled in the palace, improvised a burlesque on the "Creation of the World" for the king's amusement. Vélez de Cueva was the Supreme Being, Calderón was Adam, the role of Eve was taken by another favourite, and that of Abel by Moreto.

Court etiquette did not permit the king to attend the public theatres; but Philip IV was a constant visitor at both, going incognito and often masked to sit in a private room, watching the play as well as any new beauty who appeared on the stage. He has been credited with writing several *comedias* which were published as the works of "un ingenio da la corte."

In Madrid there were two famous theatres or *corrales*: *El Príncipe* and *La Cruz*. These, as well as the royal theatres, *El Buen Retiro* and *El Alcázar*, were the settings for the *comedias*. Into the royal playhouses were introduced many innovations in lighting and stage decorations not found in the *corrales*. The king brought a Florentine architect, Cosme

Lotti, to plan the settings and supervise the productions in his private theatres. José Pinuelo, a writer of the time, refers to these novelties:

Lotti causó pasmo por sus decoraciones magníficas y sus complicadas tramoyas, hasta el punto de apodarse *El Hechicero*.

For the performances in the palace the king sat in front, his chair placed upon a carpet, the queen at his left on her cushions. The actors exercised great freedom in their roles. An incident is related by Piñuelo concerning the famous actor Juan Rana, who, presenting an *entremés*, suddenly began as though conducting the other members of the cast on a sight-seeing tour of the palace. Catching sight of two elderly ladies with high headdress and painted faces at a window, he pointed to them and began to improvise:

Contemplad aquellas pinturas. ¡Qué bien y qué a lo vivo están pintadas aquellas viejas! No las falta más que la voz, y si hablasen, creeria que estaban vivas, porque en efecto, el arte de la pintura ha llegado a lo sumo en nuestro tiempo.

In the *corrales* the performances of the *comedias* took place in the early afternoon, since no artificial lighting was available. As the main *patio* was open to the elements, the sun gave ample light. It was usually necessary to arrive early to secure a seat. The women of the middle class were seated in the *cazuela* (sauce pan), also called the *gallinera* (hen-house). This was an enclosure in the rear of the theatre into which no men were allowed to enter. The *mosqueteros* (men of the lower class) stood behind the *bancos* and applauded or hissed the performance as it happened to strike their fancy. They were frequently the deciding factor in the success or failure of a new play. The gentlemen and ladies of the nobility sat in the balconies of the surrounding houses.

Agustin de Rojas, an author as well as an actor who toured many parts of Spain, states that *comedias* were acted everywhere, even in the smallest villages, and that the dramas were more accommodated to public taste than any other form of amusement. The principal centres of dramatic activities outside of the capital were Seville, Toledo and Valencia. Rojas describes some of the novelties which were seen in the theatres:

Llegó al tiempo que se usaron
las comedias de apariencias,
de santos y de Tramoyas,
y entre éstas farsas de guerras.

... ..

Y al fin no quedó poeta
en Sevilla que no hiciese
de algún santo su comedia.
Cantábase a tres y a cuatro,
eran las mujeres bellas,
vestíanse en hábito de hombre,

y bizarras y compuestas,
 a representar salían,
 con cadenas de oro y perlas.
 Sacábanse ya cabal os
 a los teatros, grandeza
 nunca vista hasta este tiempo
 que no fué la menor dellas.
 En efecto, ésta páso,
 llegó el nuestro, que pudiera
 llamarse el tiempo dorado;
 según el punto en que llegan
 comedias, representantes,
 trazas, conceptos, sentencias
 invenciones, novedades,
 música, entremeses, letras,
 gracia, bailes, máscaras,
 vestidos, galas, sortijas
 y al fin cosas tan diversas.

.. .. .
 Al fin la comedia está
 subida en tantas altezas.
 Que se ne pierde de vista;
 plegue a Dios, que no se pierda.

Juan de Zabaleta, *cronista* of Philip IV, wrote interestingly of the life of Madrid during this period. *El día de fiesta por la mañana* was published in 1654 and its continuation in 1660. He presents several of the same types which are satirized in the *comedias de figurón*, among them the *galén* and the *dama*.

The *galén* or *lindo* is presented as he makes his toilet, preparatory to attending Mass on the festival day. He awakens at nine, the servant brings his perfumed clothing, adjusting his girdle in order to make his form appear very slender. Then the shoemaker brings his shoes, which although about two sizes too small, are forced onto his feet. The barber shaves him and arranges his hair in curls. Next a large ruff called a *golilla* is put on. Zabaleta compares this to inserting one's head into the stocks. Finally the dandy girds on his sword, that indispensable companion of the young gallant. The final touch is added as the servants carefully place his beautiful and expensive cape upon his shoulders. It is now time for the two o'clock Mass. As he saunters forth, he is fully convinced that no feminine heart can withstand the allure of his beautiful figure.

The above description is almost an exact likeness of the hero of Moreto's *El lindo Don Diego*.

Zabaleta also permits us to see the *dama* as she enters her dressing room, places her chest of beauty aids by her side and begins to improve upon the work of God. No matter how homely she may be, she tries

to transform herself into an angel. Her skin must be as white as snow, her brows delicate lines, her cheeks roses, her lips coral and her throat alabaster. She does her hair with ribbons of many colours, like a bouquet of flowers. She then puts on an immense hoopskirt which our author characterizes "el desatino más torpe en que al ansia de aparecer bien ha caído." When she goes out to Mass she is accompanied by a page or squire and a *dueña*.

The Duchess of Aulnoy adds some information about Spanish ladies:

It was not enough to have one set of jewels, but they must have eight or ten; some of diamonds, others of pearls, rubies or emeralds. Rings, bracelets and pendants were worn.

When the *dama* went out to seek adventure she concealed her identity by wearing a mantle which hid her face, except one eye. *Tapadas*, as such women were called, are familiar figures in the *comedias*.



TWO POEMS

I

The Hunted Deer

For I have known what it is to be laid out
in the retrospection of the moon,
the hunted deer and I have known
and we two together
knowing how the hunter the moon is,
knowing how far to be unremindful of the past
to be alone in present fear
 rushing to the brink
the sad and lasting recollection running,
O deer hunted by the moon.

II

Our South

Once a twilight kingdom,
Now a tale told across a dusty candellabrum
As obedient voices settle down the stairs
Echoes in the halls
Avoiding the sun's rays
In the brittle windows.

—Charles Raines.

centenary Reviews

C. S. Lewis: Apostle To The Sceptics, by Chad Walsh
(Macmillan)

In what may one day be called the thirty-second year A.P.A.O.O. (after 'Prufrock And Other Observations') there has been created, or rather the creation has become evident of, a literary-religious hierarchy in Anglo-American letters, consisting of two invisibly divided branches under one head, Mr. T. S. Eliot: there is the literary department in which, under the watchful eye of Mr. W. H. Auden, a sort of combination Prime Minister and Heir Presumptive to the Throne, men and women like Charles Williams, Dorothy Sayers, Evelyn Underhill, C. E. M. Joad have been busily propagating Christianity and thus playing an important part in the return to Anglo-Catholicism.

One by one certain prominent intellectuals have entered the sanctuaries of the various Anglican churches, drawn by the writings of the above mentioned people and the work of such clergymen as Bishop Launcelot Andrewes; while the Roman Catholic church boasts of Thomas Aquinas, Dante and Chesterton, Anglo-Catholicism has in its ranks a host of minor writers — minor, at least, in relation to such a towering figure as Dante: John Donne, Bishop Andrewes, George Herbert, Robert Herrick and more recently T. S. Eliot, Dorothy Sayers and W. H. Auden.

In the literary department of Dictator Eliot's governmental system a foreign office has been set up in the United States; although, as he tells us in *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, there is little hope for any future contribution to culture from America, his followers have striven at length to convert this country. Mr. John Crowe Ransom and Mr. Allen Tate have energetically carried the Gospel According to Eliot, with true evangelistic zeal, throughout the literary and academic United States; populariser Cleanth Brooks, aided by Mr. Robert Penn Warren, has brought the message to the people, to the classroom, and to *The Man In The Street*; and Mr. Richard Purvis, the young American Anglo-Catholic composer, has added weight and merit to the cause with his Anglican masses.

Back at home base in England, with the spirit of T. E. Hulme, a sort of literary John the Baptist, hovering in the background, there is a consistent effort to make the newly won territory secure; the ineffable Mr. Eliot, from his cathedral chair at Faber & Faber, issues from time to time, ignoring the death rattles of last-stand Humanists, guidebooks for the group as *Idea Of A Christian Society*, *Thoughts After Lambeth* and the recent *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*; speedily the

ideas are incorporated into the writings of his whole band of eager workers, or caught up by himself — e.g., *The Cocktail Party*, his new play. (Incidentally, if the word 'band', used in the last sentence gives the idea of paucity, then it is indeed the wrong word.) Some I imagine, are wondering when the English speaking world is going to wake up and realise the effect of Anglo-Catholicism upon its Twentieth Century literature.

Outside the efforts of Mr. Eliot, and his American ambassadors of good will, there has been one man responsible in a great part, perhaps the greatest, part, for what one might well call the Twentieth Century literary Oxford movement. And that is Mr. C. S. Lewis, apostle to the sceptics, to borrow the title from the very excellent book by Mr. Chad Walsh.

Mr. Walsh has given us an informal history of the Anglican movement in his beautifully written cogent biography of C. S. Lewis; it is almost a spiritual biography, for Mr. Walsh has given only perfunctory mention to the somewhat boring requisites for a biography, birthplace, parents' histories, early years, etc. He has instead chosen very wisely to study Mr. Lewis's life from his atheistic period to the finding of faith in the Church of England. (It gives, perhaps, a mistaken connotation to say that Mr. Lewis found faith in the Church of England; rather, as Mr. Walsh tells us, he evolved his own beliefs from a theological void, and, finding that they concurred with those of Canterbury, cast his lot with it.)

Since then he has achieved remarkable success in the field of formal and informal theology — fantastic theological-philosophical science thrillers, scholarly papers (such as 'Miracles'), and radio broadcasts published in book form. Easily, to my way of thinking, the greatest orthodox mind since Thomas Aquinas, Mr. Lewis has a rather ironclad theology to offer. It is orthodox, of course, but his metaphors and methods of proof are so strikingly original and clever that it fashions what Christians accept anyway into an exciting framework for existence. His emphasis is on reality, as Mr. Walsh shows us, the reality of Hell, the reality of the Devil, the reality of God; he tells us that it is the powers of Evil who rule the world today — good Christians are those who have broken loose from that power. We are shown that through repentance and a complete surrender of oneself to God one becomes, in reality again, a *new* person, not 'a new person' in some vague moral sense, but *really* new, possessed through surrender of a personality more real and individual than ever before. He believes in the reality of Christ's second coming; it is a doctrine somewhat uncomfortably ignored even by those who profess it; but Mr. Lewis insists that for some it will simply be too late — when it occurs — and in the same vein, insists that when death comes, one either conquers it through Christ...or is conquered by it.

In 'The Great Divorce' (written not as an answer, as is told us in the preface, to Blake's 'Marriage of Heaven and Hell' but rather suggested

by it) Mr. Lewis portrays humans in the Garden of Paradise, being given a choice: either to choose Heaven or what, if it be chosen, will be Hell. One person is too concerned with theology and church affairs to bother; another, a grieving mother, would rather have her son in the other place than be without him in Heaven; another, a painter, demands to be allowed to take a look around first to see if the scenery is suitable for paint and canvas. The Spirits, those already in Heaven, try to explain that it all doesn't matter. . . if the mother will just forget her son for a little while, he will be given to her in such a way that she couldn't dream of; if the painter will forget his painting for a little while, he will be rewarded with Beauty beyond even the dreams of the great masters. The Spirits infer that life spent in the actual presence of God will be *fun*. . . in a like manner, Mr. Lewis tells that an earthly life spent as much with Christ as possible will actually be *fun*. . . and he means the word in the fullest sense.

One could elaborate at great length on his charming metaphors and great power of intellect, but Mr. Walsh's book can do this best; it can serve as either an introduction to C. S. Lewis, or a summary of his work for those already familiar with it. One wonders if Mr. Walsh is Anglo-Catholic himself; the book is so objectively and fairly presented that the author's personal beliefs rarely, if ever, show through — and this, of course, is as it should be. C. S. Lewis, the greatest member of the religious department of Mr. Eliot's hierarchy (though at times unabashedly a dissenter in literary matters) has been handled with justice and humour. The book is recommended to all readers.

—Albert Paris Leary

Actfive and Other Poems, by Archibald MacLeish
(Random House)

This volume of poetry, Mr. MacLeish's latest, at least reassures the reader of the poet's genius as a writer of verse. The best lines of the long title poem approach the beauty of such earlier poems as "Ars Poetica" and the supremely achieved "You, Andrew Marvell." The shorter poems which comprise the latter half of the book are statements of belief, for the most part, and contain a refreshing amount of lyric beauty.

The long poem, "Actfive," definitely harks back to the earlier and more successful "The Hamlet of Archibald MacLeish." In the latter poem, Mr. Untermeyer remarks, "the half-conscious breaks through . . . remote associations, shifting allusions, disordered griefs, phantasms, fag-ends of memories . . ." are intended to bring about an identification of the reader with Hamlet. In "Actfive," through similar devices and constructions, coupled with constant and often totally ineffective repetition and question-and-answer and question-and-no-answer, the reader is to find himself in a land where "the flesh has its belief and the bone its expectation" and "where vultures huddle and the soft and torpid rats recoil and crawl." The condition of this land, according to the poet, is the regression of man:

. . . once, time's companion,
Gentled by labor, taught by stone and wood,
By beast and rope, by rain and sun and seed,
To bear and be born, give need for need,
Live and let live, answer ill with good,
Keep peace, hate war, bind wounds, be patient, love—

but now "murdered and his sweetness blown with maggots of the intellectual lies . . ."

The element which has been most responsible for Mr. MacLeish's success as a writer is suspension. When a poet depends upon suspension to set the cadence, mood and structure of his poem, he is very often likely to fall into a sort of poetic ductility. When MacLeish has avoided this ductility (by this I mean the absence, through various types of fault in construction and effect, of that quality which Mr. Allen Tate has called "the ultimate effect of the whole" which comes as a "'result' of a configuration of meaning") he has proved himself to be a master of constructive verse; when he fails the saving grace of his poems is chiefly their pungency of expression. The influence of Eliot and various modern French poets has doubtless played a vastly important part in the development of a suspension technique in MacLeish's poems.

Another element which is important in MacLeish's verse is intention. Idea always enters into his writing. "The Fall of the City" is perhaps his first real triumph of idea. If MacLeish is remembered as a poet, however, he will be remembered as a *modern lyricist*. His political thoughts and stands are highly important and relevant to our time, but when they are heard and heeded the world will have passed into another era of political thought or perhaps the labyrinth which he himself predicts for the unmindful and misdirected world.

Meaning is by no means obscurative of being in the lyrics. Of the shorter poems in *Actfive* "Psyche with the Candle" will provide an adequate illustration of this fact. "Love is the most difficult mystery . . ." the poet announces.

*Love is a bird in a fist:
To hold it hides it, to look at it lets it go.
It will twist loose if you lift so much as a finger.
It will stay if you cover it — stay but unknown and invisible.*

This type of lyricism compares favorably with the enduring lines of "You, Andrew Marvell":

*And here face down beneath the sun
And here upon earth's moonward height
To feel the always coming on
The always rising of the night . . .*

To some readers MacLeish's lyrical beauty will come as a relief from the classical verse of the Pounds, Eliots and Audens. These people will only be delighted, the poetry will not hold much more for them.

To other people the verses will be the latest supreme achievement in the world of poetry: these will be the staunch MacLeish followers who have never wavered since the day they became literary nouveaux riches. To the rest of the readers the poems will be much needed expressions of ideas in art.

—Charles A. Raines.

Nineteen Eighty-Four by George Orwell (Harcourt & Brace)

In the last few years an increasingly large number of sages and writers have become concerned over the expanding powers and domain of the State. Of all these worryings on paper, only a few manage to convey to the thoughtful reader any conception other than that of an author who is trying to get votes for the other party. Of these few exceptions there are none that can approach *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell for sheer, terrifying credibility and thought-provoking narrative. Mr. Orwell is to be complimented on his restraint in several portions which could have easily degenerated into cheap melodrama or dogmatic propaganda. He resists the temptation to let his plot run away from him or become merely another "It Can Happen Here" piece, although in its simplest connotation that is exactly what it is. It differs however in that it remains throughout a terribly convincing book and thoroughly real possibility.

The action takes place in the strange world of the year 1984, in the city of London, "Airstrip One." The harrassed and pitiful, though far from comical, hero is one Smith, Winston, a minor clerk in the all powerful Party. He lives a life of total subservience and frugality, exactly like all of his fellow workers. The society of his world is divided into a hierarchy of three rigid and absolute categories. At the zenith of the State is the Inner Party, an oligarchy presided over by an almost mythical leader, known as "Big Brother," who dominates the lives and destinies of the State, although he is never seen by any of his subjects.

The middle level of Society is the Outer Party, composed of such people as Smith: minor functionaries, clerks, and office personnel. These individuals lead colorless, completely regimented lives, with no freedom of expression, marriage, love, or even thought.

At the bottom of the ladder is the miserable and ignorant proletariat, spoken of contemptuously as the "proles." They are factory workers and manual laborers who live in a world unto themselves, so unimportant that the government doesn't even care what they do and think, so long as their work is completed. This is one of the great paradoxes of the entire book. It is ironical that the government, which originally was merely a leftist party purporting to support the common man, now reviles him in a manner reminiscent of the serfdom of the middle ages.

The government, the ultimate in complete police states, is divided into four administrative departments under the hand of the unseen "Big Brother." The first two are the Ministry of Plenty, which is concerned principally with rationing and the restriction of consumer goods, and the Ministry of Truth which has to do with the propagation of lies and rigid dialectic designed to keep the people in fear and reverence of the party. The third is the Ministry of Peace, which contains the heads of the warmaking machine upon which the entire structure of the economy is based; the fourth and possibly the most important is the Ministry of Love, the home of the brutal and efficient Thought Police.

The Party has named a number of things as crimes against the State, punishable by death or worse. Among these are Thoughtcrime, which consists of thinking wrongly on any subject; Facecrime, the wearing of an expression which indicates that the individual is not completely and sufficiently happy with the party and determined to exert his best in its behalf. The methods by which these are checked include such things as the Telescreen, which is a two-way television screen in the homes of the lower Party Members over which they are watched constantly for any signs of disloyalty.

This leaves in the reader a sort of apprehensive fear, not so much of what may come from the other side of the world, but from his own country, his own government; it is the story of what may happen to man kind should he forget that peace, not war, is the destined way of life, and that power in the wrong hands can, and perhaps will lead to the destruction of not only western civilization as we know it but of all the forward developments of the last three thousand years. Power is Orwell's central theme, not merely power as a means of control, but pure power for its own sake, absolute and total. In this sense it means not only the control of the economic and political destinies of the people, but absolute control of their beliefs, families, happiness, language, and even their very thoughts. Although when seen in the light of our present-day democratic form of government, these possibilities seem remote indeed, one has only to consider the lesson of history to realize that the future is indeed a closed door, an unknown quantity. Think of the glorious French Revolution, which disposed of a tyrannical monarch, and then a few years later found itself under the heel of Napoleon Bonaparte, a worse despot than Louis ever was. By this one should not, of course, imply that tyranny necessarily follows social progress, or that popular governments lead to dictatorships, but it is true, as Orwell so effectively points out, that power can and will be misused, even when the people deliberately place it in the hands of their so called benefactors, if these individuals are infected with "the foulest passion of all," ambition for power.

Mr. Orwell seeks to teach a lesson that should be required reading for all economists and politicians. Until the world realizes that truly, all men are brothers and that the world is able to give everyone in it a

good measure of its riches and that the simple rights of man are more important than the "Manifest Destiny" of any one nation or group of people, this lesson will be important. Only when human rights are considered above states rights will we be able to laugh at this book and say that it couldn't happen to us.

—Evan Campbell.

Hound-dog Man, by Fred Gipson (Harper & Brothers)

In little more than 200 pages Fred Gipson has completed with elemental beauty all the requirements of a good novel. Each character stands in strong black and white, ever fulfilling the principles of decorum, ever true to himself. The story, as told through the lips of a twelve-year old boy, is told with the heart and mind of a child, his simple wisdom, his sense of the poetry and beauty of life, and sometimes his lack of understanding of the antics of grownups. *Hound-dog Man* embodies the life, loves and hates of the American farm folk who gave us truly American literature in ballads and folk-lore.

Our hero is Blackie Scantling, whose excuse for his single state was really his philosophy: "You can starve him half to death. . . run him till his feet's wore off. . . git on a high lonesome drunk and kick him. . . But he's still your dog. Ready to lick your hand and warm your feet of a cold night. Now show me a woman that'll do the same." His dogs, Old Rock and Drum, and the game filled woods were the loves of Blackie, not that he wasn't a lady killer on the side.

Cotton Kinney relates the tale of his idol, Blackie, the big coon-hunt and its outcome. He is a real boy, detailed with excitement, tiny hurts and jealousies, embarrassments and love. A hound of his own was his dream; Spud Sessoms is his plump bosom pal; his main trouble? "I knew I never would amount to anything wasting my time on school nine months of the year." But poor Cotton was forced to his imprisonment by his kindly parents, Papa and Mama Kinney.

The rich-man villain, Hog Waller, is thorough-goingly yellow-bellied and villainous and suitably makes his living from his vicious, marauding range hogs.

Little Dony, the girl who "matched Blackie, look for look" and gave up her reputation to protect and catch her man, serves her purpose in the plot's double climax. She ends the romantic wanderings of Mr. Scantling and fulfills Cotton's dream with a gift.

Mr. Gipson has colored his word canvas with touches of the tricks of hunting coons, rabbits, squirrels, gobblers; with small inner stories (Blackie on all fours charging a charging bull; fooling the poor armadillo who chased the pebbles thrown in front of him, thinking them

bugs); food descriptions which almost reach the sense of smell; the tall-tales of the older folk and the musician's fiddle playing. The setting is given in lines almost poetry; "...canyon was filling with blue shadows. The moonshine was white magic that night. It lay in puddles between the brush and rocks."

In *Hound-dog Man* Fred Gipson has some of the humor and children's philosophy of Mark Twain and some of the folk-lore, humor and setting of Stone's *Devil Take a Whittler*, but this is absolutely his own bright creation, original and as outstanding as an albino coon up a tree. *Hound-dog Man* is that novel about which readers smile and sigh, "That's the most pleasant book I've read in a long time."

—Mary Adair Brown.



(Continued from page 2)

Cleanth Brooks, the distinguished American critic, makes his first appearance in the centenary review this issue. He is the author of *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*, *The Well Wrought Urn*, and several widely used text books. He is perhaps the only member of the group often called "The New Critics" to make his influence felt directly in the contemporary classroom.

Albert Paris Leary is a young poet studying at Centenary College; he has lately had work accepted by *Experiment*, *Carolina Quarterly* and *Arizona Quarterly*. A one act verse play of his, *The innumerable Caravan* was produced by "The Louisiana Players' Guild" in Baton Rouge last July. Currently he is at work on a libretto for a one act opera.

Charles Raines, a graduate student at Tulane University, has appeared before in this magazine. He lives in Shreveport where he was one of the founders of *Venture*.

Ralph White, author of the essay on Spanish comedy, is a professor of Spanish at Centenary College. This essay is part of his recent Ph.D. work. He is married and lives in Shreveport.

Joseph Patrick Roppolo is a graduate student at Tulane University, and a native of Shreveport. He became associated with *Venture* this last summer.

Helen Hoyt, the distinguished poet, needs little introduction to readers of literary magazines. From the time in the early 'twenties when she began to appear in *Poetry: a magazine of verse* and other reviews, up through today she has occupied a high place in American letters. She now lives in California.

Evan Campbell is a student at Centenary College. He is interested in a wide variety of current affairs and devotes most of his writing to

articles on contemporary economic developments and thought. His analysis of the industrial movement in the South, *Trouble In Paradise*, appeared in the last issue of this review.

Mary Adair Brown is the originator of *Venture*. Through her efforts aided by the Editor of *the centenary review*, the *Venture* group was brought into being on a memorable evening (to the staff of this magazine) in November of 1947. Miss Brown is interested in art, music and writing. She sang one of the title roles in *Hanzel And Gretel* produced by the Centenary School of Music last year; she is a member of *Mademoiselle's* college literary board.

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